GARRY KASPAROV

ON MY GREAT PREDECESSORS PART V

EVERYMAN CHESS

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Best regards!! Saludos!

Merry Christmas from

CAISSA LOVERS

a modern history of the mid-20th century development of chess

GARRY KASPAROV
MY GREAT PREDECESSORS

with the participation of Dmitry Plisetsky

Korchnoi

Karpov

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EVERYMAN CHESS

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INTRODUCTION

Life after Fischer

This volume is devoted to the twelfth world champion Anatoly Karpov and his historic opponent Viktor Korchnoi, and to their staggeringly dramatic struggle for the chess throne, which filled the unusual vacuum that had arisen after Fischer's untimely departure. Another important topic – the openings revolution of the 1970s-1980s – proved to be so extensive and interesting, that a separate, 6th volume, has had to be devoted to it.

In the previous volume I put forward the provocative suggestion that, in a match with Fischer, Karpov would have had real winning chances, and that the American champion declined to defend his title as he was afraid of losing to an unfamiliar opponent – the leader of a new generation, a forceful professional, who had fully assimilated the lessons of his great predecessor. Now I will try to justify this suggestion, by imagining a possible scenario of the match and carefully studying those unique qualities of Karpov, which enabled him for almost a quarter of a century to be at the summit of chess or literally only a step away. This chapter turned out to be one of the longest in the entire series, which is not surprising: Karpov's influence on the development of chess has been truly epochal – it was felt right to the end of the 20th century.

But an enormous contribution has also been made by Korchnoi, a legendary player, who has been able to accomplish the seemingly impossible – conquer time. Contrary to all the impressions about age limits, this great match and tournament fighter reached his creative peak at the age of 47, surpassing the former champions Petrosian and Spassky. In the history of chess he is the only challenger to have played de facto three matches for the world crown, in one of which, Baguio (1978), he all but became world champion. And this when he was 20 years older than his opponent!

After all, it appeared that the young Karpov, supported by the entire might of the Soviet machine, simply had no equals: the older generation of top-class grandmasters had already left the stage, the middle generation had been 'knocked out' by the Second World War (and Fischer had 'knocked out' himself), and in the younger generation, for all its brilliance and professionalism, there was no star of champion-like magnitude. The only real intrigue in the mid-1970s appeared to be the Fischer-Karpov match, which would undoubtedly have given the development of chess a colossal impulse. When it collapsed, there was a temporary period of quiet and disap-

pointment. But nature cannot endure empty spaces, and soon a vigorous attempt on the chess summit was made by Korchnoi, for which he was forced to leave the USSR, where he had been persecuted, and enlist the moral support of the West.

His battles with Karpov, especially the match in Baguio, had a very great influence on all aspects of the game – the purely chess aspect, off the board, and psychological. As it later transpired, this was the prelude to Karpov's clashes with the leader of the next generation – the author of these lines (the topic of Volume 7). But Korchnoi, after handing the 'Olympic baton' to me in our 1983 match, has continued to play successfully in tournaments and as a result has shown himself to be an exceptional example of competitive longevity. In this respect only Lasker and Smyslov can compare with him, but Korchnoi's victories have been achieved in the ultra-intensive chess of the present day!

All these matches for the world championship demanded serious research work. Here not only were the fruits of the post-Fischer opening revolution reaped, but also the rapid advancement of chess thinking was continued, towards the present-day computer era...

When analysing anew the games of Karpov and Korchnoi, and remembering the games already examined of other champions and challengers, I began thinking about the role of intuition in the accomplishments of outstanding players. This question intrigued me: is this not the root of differences in playing styles? It turns out that the great masters can be arbitrarily divided into three groups.

1. Players with relatively poor intuition (of course, only by the standards of champions): Steinitz, Botvinnik, Euwe, Fischer... But they had qualities which compensated for their somewhat straightforward play: erudition, logic, orderliness, iron will and an extraordinary capacity for work.

2. Players with strong, at times phenomenal strategic intuition: Capablanca, Smyslov, Petrosian, Spassky, Karpov... Of the challengers, perhaps only Rubinstein can be added to this group. All of them would find the best places for their pieces with staggering ease and accuracy.

3. Players with a strong specific intuition, operating in sharp situations where the material and positional equilibrium was disturbed: Lasker, Alekhine, Tal, Kasparov... And also Chigorin, Bronstein, Stein and Korchnoi, who in the early 1960s was called 'Tal in reverse'.

Some may find this division questionable, but it is the fruit of a thorough study and comparison of the games of the champions. Incidentally, when analysing the old games with a computer, I discovered that many intuitive decisions by the classics were correct and that far more mistakes were made in later analysis. This would seem to be a paradox: after all, when analysing there is no hurry and one can move the pieces. But the point is that at this moment the intuition which operates intensively during a game, in conditions of extreme tension and limited time, is switched off. Intuition truly is the tsarina of the chessboard!

I should like to express my thanks to USSR Honoured Trainers Alexander Nikitin, Igor Zaitsev and Mark Dvoretsky, grandmasters Yuri Razuvaev, Yuri Dokhoian and Vladimir Belov, and master Alexander Shakarov, for assistance in the preparation of this volume for publication.

CHAPTER ONE

Viktor the Terrible

Marathon Runner

It is difficult to talk about a contemporary of mine, who has lived such a great, interesting and intensive life in chess. Just think – the first major successes of Viktor Lvovich Korchnoi (born 23 March 1931) were achieved more than half a century ago! Many of those born in the 1930s and 1940s have now given up playing, but even at the start of the 21st century Korchnoi continues to compete in tournaments, and the young can merely envy his energy, thirst for battle, and ability to give his all when playing.

This chapter is fully comparable in size with some of the chapters devoted to world champions. Here it is a question not only of the unique length of Korchnoi's chess career, but also of his rare inventiveness, and his tireless attempts to find something new in seemingly exhaustively studied positions. All his life he has been at the leading edge of chess thinking and he has made a valuable contribution to the development of the game. It was this fact that induced me to devote a large section to the original play of Viktor Lvovich, and to focus attention on his most important and vivid features.

Korchnoi's heritage is many-faceted – over the decades he has several times corrected and changed his style. But the main thing has invariably remained his search for chess truth. Korchnoi has always been merciless both to himself, and to his opponents. Of course, this feature of his character has not added to his number of friends. But otherwise it is probably impossible to seek the eternally elusive chess truth. One has to be prepared for every move being called into question, every decision being fiercely criticised. One must look truth in the eye and not be afraid to come to any conclusions, even the most unprejudiced, if they reflect the real picture.

Already in his youth Korchnoi had showed himself to be an unusual player. Most prefer to attack, and few like playing defensively, so to speak from the base line, patiently preparing to launch a counterattack. But that is the way Korchnoi played: provoking the enemy fire, accepting sacrifices and then masterfully exploiting the weaknesses arising in the enemy position. Back in the 1950s this extremely risky style gave him the widely held reputation of being a difficult, awkward opponent for any grandmaster, right up to the world champion.

An amazing paradox: when, after passing hundreds of Korchnoi's games through a

rigorous filter, I selected about forty of the most representative, it unexpectedly transpired that in the first twenty of them, covering the years 1954-1977, he had the black pieces! But if you think about it, this is fully in accordance with the character of his play. Such seemingly accidental coincidences merely confirm the overall trend.

Child of the Blockade

Korchnoi's childhood was difficult and full of deprivation, like that of many children of the war years. Half a century later he was to write: 'Apparently I did not receive a proper Soviet upbringing in my family. It is most probable that my father paid the full price for this carelessness – along with several hundred other poorly-armed volunteers, he died on Lake Ladoga in November 1941. This also applied to the remaining members of my father's family, where I was brought up – they all died from hunger during the siege of Leningrad. But I remained, I survived.'

Viktor was able to study chess seriously only at the age of 13, when in the autumn of 1944 he joined the chess club at the Leningrad Pioneers Palace. At the time he also signed up for two more clubs – recitation and music, although it quickly transpired that he had neither correct pronunciation, nor a piano that was essential for practising. But he already played chess quite well – a year earlier, soon after the partial breaking of the blockade, he had taken part in a junior tournament(!), apparently after reading an announcement on the bomb-damaged wall of the Anichkov Palace: 'Enrolment of schoolchildren to the Leningrad open championship takes place on Monday. Director of the chess club, A.Model.'

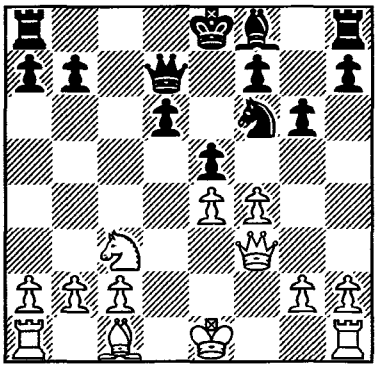
'At Fontanka we could hear the thunder of artillery shelling, when Viktor and I sat down to play our first chess game,' recalls his contemporary, the journalist Oleg Skuratov. 'My opponent was a thin, dark-haired boy wearing a neat quilted jacket. We were playing in the basement of the palace, and the cold was terrible, but the "hall" of the deserted bomb shelter seemed simply divine to us. I remember being impressed by the way my opponent accurately recorded the moves of our game in a school notebook, and the chess notation signs intrigued me. As a result of this (as it genuinely appeared to me!) I lost a mysterious pawn endgame. With a face as long as a fiddle I went up to Model: "I lost!" "Against whom?" I again glanced at the notebook and read the name of my opponent: "Someone by the name of Korchnoi!" I said in vexation. The boy in the quilted jacket glanced angrily in my direction... for a long time he did not forgive me for these inadvertent little words "Someone by the name of". At the age of 12 Viktor already had a heightened sense of dignity.'

His first books were Lasker's manual and Tartakower's work *Osvobozhdennye Shakhmaty* (Liberated Chess), and his first teachers were the masters Andrey Batuev and Abram Model. Then Korchnoi studied in the group of the subsequently well-known trainer Vladimir Zak (in 1946 the nine-year-old Boris Spassky came to him, and immediately became one of his favourite pupils) and within two years he was already participating in the USSR Junior Championship. After five rounds he was among the leaders, but then, after losing a game, he somehow went to pieces and in the end only shared 11th-12th places, while first place was taken by his future implacable opponent Petrosian...

But in the next two national junior championships (1947 and 1948) Korchnoi was the winner, although in the second of these he had a difficult time. 'After losing in the first round, he so lost heart that he wrote a gloomy letter to his trainer Zak, in which he admitted that he did not believe in himself,' testifies the writer Viktor Vasiliev. 'Only a reply by telegram from his mentor, angry and at the same time encouraging, forced him to take himself in hand.'

Many games from that period have been lost, but one episode that has been preserved

is the amusing finish to a miniature, played between the 17-year-old Korchnoi and the 11-year-old Spassky (Leningrad 1948).



11...♕g4? (instead of the normal 11...♗g7) **12 ♘d5!,** and Black resigned, after noticing to his horror that after 12...♕xf3 13 ♘xf6+ ♔e7 14 ♘d5+ and gxf3 he loses a piece. The hopeless resistance could have been prolonged after 12...♔d8 13 ♕xg4 ♘xg4 14 h3 ♘h6 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♗g5+ ♔d7 17 ♗f6 ♖g8, but the distressed Boris no longer had the moral strength...

David Bronstein remembers a difficult simultaneous display with clocks that he gave against ten candidate masters in the autumn of 1948 in a Leningrad chess club:

'Each played for himself, but beside one of the boards, peeping over Cherepkov's shoulder, I saw a young and lively face with brilliant, clever eyes. The display lasted a long time – at least five hours. And at the very end, beside one board with a very interesting and complicated position, there were just three of us left. My main opponent was sitting calmly, but his voluntary consultant was fidgeting and literally piercing me with his glance. Some 15 minutes later Cherepkov offered me a draw and with a happy sigh of relief I agreed. And here Vitya Korchnoi (he was the consultant) leapt up from his chair, leaned across the chessboard and hurriedly, as if fearing that I might evaporate into thin air and disappear, with his inimitable pert voice that later became famous, exclaimed: "Didn't you win? But you promised! Only 5-5!" But I did not become flustered and I calmly replied: "What do you mean! Who told you this? I was dreaming of 5-5. After all, these are players from a city with ancient traditions and a great chess culture." And Korchnoi calmed down.'

This was the first meeting of two remarkable players, who since then have related to each other with invariable sympathy and respect.

After finishing school, having already decided to devote his life to chess, Korchnoi nevertheless entered the History Faculty of Leningrad University. 'Student poverty was proverbial,' he wrote later. 'I myself remember: in my pocket I had money either for a tram ticket, or for the cheapest cigarettes. And very rarely for a miserable student dinner.' Viktor was very fond of history, but he was even more fond of chess and... card games (like, however, Lasker before him and Karpov after him). In the words of an eye-witness, 'in the flat where many young chess players gathered, he could play chess or poker from morning till evening; he would take a "time-out" when he had to go to the next round of the Leningrad Championship, and closer to midnight he would again return and could play several hands of preference.'

Thanks to his rare independence and objectivity of thinking, Korchnoi enjoyed an indisputable authority among Leningrad's chess players: when, in the course of a tournament, some conflict arose, the participants would often turn not to the arbiters, but to Viktor, and his verdict would put an end to the matter. However, this independence also had its adverse side. 'I took every barrier head-on, and I had ridiculous confidence in myself,' Korchnoi admitted years later. He did not have any qualified help, but when towards the end of the 1940s grandmaster Tolush offered such help, 'to make a master out of him', he proudly replied: 'I myself will become a master!' Which he soon did – after the Chigorin Memorial tournament (Leningrad 1951). But later, after seeing

how Tolush had been able to transform Spassky, he greatly regretted his refusal...

As a result, although the indications were that Korchnoi was a highly talented and promising player, each new step forward cost him enormous effort. In his first USSR Championship semi-final (1950) he contrived to start with... 0 out of 7(!), but then he nevertheless managed to pull himself together at the finish: +4=4. He finished the next semi-final (1951) with a plus score, and in 1952 he finally broke through to the final – where he immediately finished in an honourable sixth place, ahead of Bronstein, Smyslov and Keres! This was his first major success.

According to Korchnoi himself, he achieved this success not thanks to his understanding of the game, but thanks to intensive work at the board: 'I would be outplayed, but I would resist tenaciously, and since grandmasters are ordinary people (they also become tired, make mistakes, and get into time-trouble), I was quite often able to emerge unscathed. In this tournament I played for the first time against world champion Botvinnik, and although the game ended in a draw, during analysis I realised how far I was from genuine chess wisdom. I ascertained that I had an insufficiently deep understanding of chess strategy. In addition, I didn't like and didn't know how to attack; defence was my natural element. This one-sided strategy was often exploited by my opponents... I realised that I had to diversify my style: to be able to attack and to fight for the initiative.'

Korchnoi also qualified fairly confidently for the final of the next, 21st USSR Championship. In the semi-final (Vilnius 1953) Korchnoi won a remarkable game against Suetin. In a complex, multi-piece ending, he unexpectedly gave up both a pawn and the exchange with his 30th move, sharply activating his forces and achieving a rapid turning point in the play. 'Before this game for some reason it had not occurred to me,' writes Viktor Lvovich, 'that a sacrifice of material, even when forced, even when the queens are not on the board(!), can lead to the seizure of the initiative and the winning of the game... I had to reinterpret many of the impressions of chess that I had had up till then.'

The USSR Championship, which took place early in 1954 in Kiev, became a new and vivid landmark in Korchnoi's biography. After beginning with a defeat against Suetin (in a risky 'Accelerated Dragon'), he scored three wins and two draws – with Taimanov and Petrosian – and established himself in the leading group. In the seventh round he had Black against the experienced Semion Furman, Korchnoi's future second and subsequently Karpov's long-standing trainer, who was half a point ahead of him. Furman's first move was not a secret to anyone – 1 d4!?

Since, as has already been said, the majority of the best and most characteristic games of the early and even the mature Korchnoi were played with the black pieces, his opening repertoire is of particular interest. After 1 e4 he most often and successfully played the French Defence, but he also left his mark in the Sicilian, Alekhine, Pirc-Ufimtsev and Caro-Kann Defences, and in the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez (as will be described later). After 1 d4 for many years he constantly employed the dynamic Grünfeld Defence, and only in his middle age did he turn to more fundamental defences – the Nimzo-Indian and the Queen's Indian.

At that time the Grünfeld Defence allowed wide scope for creativity – White was only just probing for ways to retain hopes of an advantage. But the main thing was that Black's strategic plan in this opening fully corresponded with Korchnoi's counterattacking style. Allowing White to create a strong pawn centre, he then does everything possible to undermine and destroy it, in the hope of exploiting the weaknesses that inevitably arise in the opponent's position. The following game with Furman, while not without its faults, gives a good illustration of this strategy.

Game 1
S.Furman-V.Korchnoi
21st USSR Championship,
Kiev 1954, 7th round
Grünfeld Defence D92

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 (or first 4 ♗f4 ♗g7 5 e3 and ♖c1 – *Volume 3, Game Nos.12 and 29*) **4...♗g7 5 ♗f4 0-0 6 ♖c1**

After the usual 6 e3 c5 7 dxc5 ♕a5 White does not gain any advantage (Rauzer-Alatortsev, 7th USSR Championship, Moscow 1931; Levenfish-Botvinnik, 11th matchgame, Moscow/Leningrad 1937).

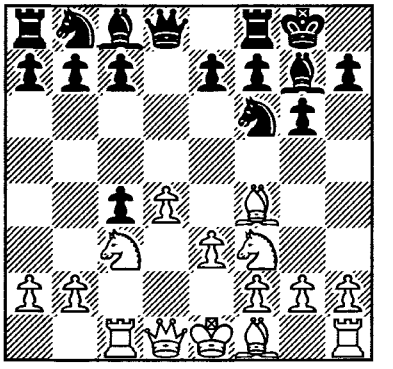
'The idea of the variation with 6 ♖c1 is to seize the c-file, control of which plays an important role in the subsequent play; in addition, the threat to the c7-pawn induces Black to take on c4, which is also of definite benefit to White.' (Furman). This variation became especially popular at the turn of the 20th-21st centuries. It need hardly be added that today it has been exhaustively studied.

6...dxc4

This is considered more reliable than 6...c5 7 dxc5 ♗e6, as in Ragozin's games with Botvinnik (8th matchgame, Leningrad 1940) and Mikenas (12th USSR Championship, Moscow 1940), or 7...dxc4 8 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 9 e3 (9 e4!? ♘a6 10 e5 Bronstein-Filip, Amsterdam Candidates 1956) 9...♘a6 10 c6 bxc6 11 ♗xc4 ♘d5 12 ♗e5 ♘b6 13 ♗e2 f6 14 ♗g3 with a complicated ending, slightly better for White (Korchnoi-Stein, 30th USSR Championship, Erevan 1962).

7 e3

Strengthening the d4-point. The game Borisenko-Korchnoi (Leningrad 1953) went 7 e4 c5 8 dxc5 ♕a5 9 ♘d2 ♗e6 10 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 11 ♘xc4 ♕xc5 12 ♕e2 ♘c6 with equality, but later, against Zagorovsky (Sochi 1958), Korchnoi employed the strong novelty 9 e5! After this 7...♗g4! came to the forefront (Pachman-Gligoric, Havana 1962). This continuation was actively tested at the end of the 20th century, and in the main line 8 ♗xc4 ♗xf3 9 gxf3 ♘h5 10 ♗e3 e5 11 dxe5 ♗xe5 12 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 Black has a quite acceptable ending.



7...♗e6!?

A novelty, although, it is also possible to play 7...c5 8 ♗xc4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♘bd7 10 ♗g3 ♘b6 (but not 10...e5? 11 ♘db5 ♘e8 12 ♘e4 ♕a5+ 13 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 14 ♘xd2 a6 15 ♘c3 ♘d6 16 ♘d5! Furman-Livshin, 3rd round) 11 ♗b3 ♗g4 12 f3 ♗d7 13 0-0 ♘h5 (Borisenko-Byvshev, Leningrad 1954) or even 7...♘bd7!? 8 ♗xc4 c5 (Karpov-Kasparov, 3rd matchgame, New York rapidplay 2002), in both cases with equality.

8 ♘g5 ♗d5

For many years this move was made automatically, until in the game Dreev-Sutovsky (Essen 2000) 8...♗g4!? 9 f3 ♗c8 occurred. Later I successfully played this against Karpov (1st matchgame, New York rapidplay 2002).

9 ♘xd5

A seemingly natural exchange. In reply to 9 e4 Black had prepared 9...h6! 10 exd5 hxg5 11 ♗xg5 ♘xd5 12 ♗xc4 ♘b6 13 ♗b3 ♘c6, for example: 14 d5 ♘d4 15 0-0 ♖e8 with equality (Toran-Korchnoi, Palma de Mallorca 1968), or 14 ♘e2!? (an attempt to exploit the power of the two bishops) 14...a5, and present day practice has shown that Black has sufficient counterplay.

9...♘xd5 10 ♗g3?!

Retaining the bishop in the hope of quickly

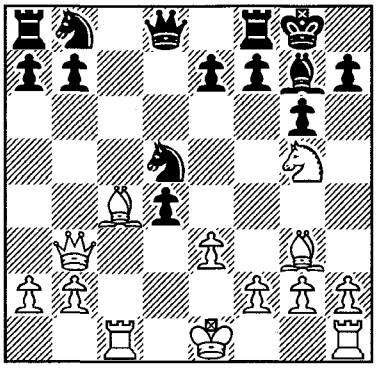
completing his development and seizing the initiative. However, this does not succeed and the move in the game proves to be a loss of an important tempo. Since the mid-1980s the immediate 10 ♗xc4 has been played, with the gambit idea 10...♘xf4 11 ♕f3!

10...c5!

A typically 'Grünfeld' undermining move, emphasising White's backward development. 'Of course, I didn't even think of keeping the pawn by 10...b5? in view of 11 b3!' (Korchnoi)

11 ♗xc4 cxd4 12 ♕b3

If 12 0-0, then 12...e6, attacking the knight at g5 and remaining a pawn up. Apparently Furman was pinning all his hopes on the queen move, which creates threats against the knight at d5, the f7-point and the b7-pawn.



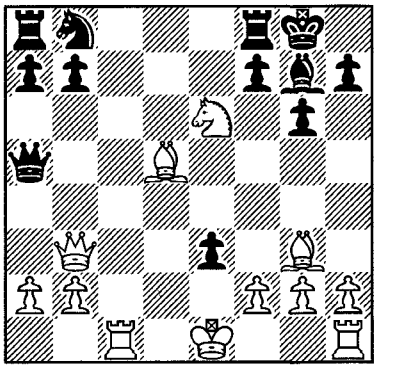
12...dxe3!?

'The game enters a phase of wild complications. After thinking for more than an hour, I rejected 12...e6 in view of 13 ♕xb7 ♘d7 (13...♘b6 14 ♘xf7) 14 ♗xd5.' (Korchnoi). Although, in my view, after 14...♕xg5 it is only White who may have problems in this position.

There was another reasonable alternative in 12...♕a5+ 13 ♔e2, and now not 13...♘b6?! (with the idea of 14 ♘xf7 ♘xc4 A.Geller) on account of 14 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 15 h4 ♘c6 16 h5!? ♕xg5 17 hxg6 h5(6) 18 ♗f4 with a dangerous attack, but 13...d3+ 14 ♗xd3 (14 ♔xd3 ♘a6 15 ♗xd5 ♖ad8! 16 ♔e4 e6 etc.) 14...♘c6 15 ♘e4 ♘db4 with equality, or 13...e6 14 ♗xd5 ♕xd5! (this is simpler than 14...exd5 15 ♕xb7 ♘a6 16 ♗d6 dxe3 17 fxe3 d4! 18 ♘f3 ♕xa2 19 ♘xd4! ♖fe8 20 ♖hd1 ♖ad8 21 ♕b5!?) 15 ♕xd5 exd5 16 ♖c7 b6 with a favourable ending for Black. However, the move in the game is sharper and more interesting.

Either way, it becomes obvious that the well-known theoretician and 'White expert' Furman has already lost the opening duel. By the 12th(!) move White has ended up in an unpleasant position and he is obliged to seek a way of maintaining the balance. It seems to me that this demonstrates the level of theoretical development at that time.

13 ♗xd5 e6 (a double attack, the bishop being unable to move on account of 14...♕d2+) **14 ♘xe6 ♕a5+**



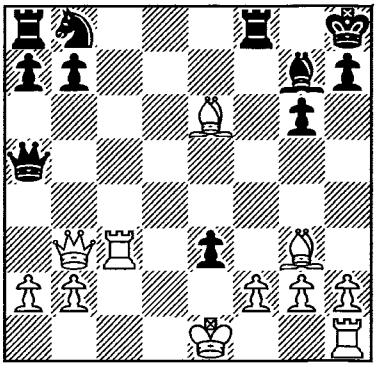
15 ♖c3

After 15 ♔f1 fxe6 16 ♗xe6+ (16 ♗f3 ♘c6) 16...♔h8 17 ♕xe3 ♘c6 (Korchnoi) Black has a serious initiative for the pawn: it is hard for White to bring his rook at h1 into play and to safeguard his king.

15...fxe6 16 ♗xe6+?!

'White continues to play for an attack and ends up in an inferior position. Instead of this he could have gone into a roughly equal ending: 16 ♗xb7 ♗xc3+ 17 ♕xc3 ♕b6 18 ♕b3 exf2+ 19 ♔e2 ♘d7 20 ♕xb6 axb6 21 ♗xa8 ♖xa8.' (Korchnoi). Or ventured the sharp 17 bxc3 exf2+ 18 ♔e2 (18 ♗xf2? ♕e5+ 19 ♔f1 ♕f5) 18...♕f5 19 ♖f1 ♘a6 etc.

16...♔h8



17 0-0?!

Black's position is also preferable after 17 fxe3 ♘c6 18 ♗f2 ♗xc3+ 19 bxc3 ♖f6 20 0-0 ♖af8 (it is not easy for the white bishops to display their power), but the play would still have been unclear.

17...e2!

Now Black's advantage is obvious: this 'weak' pawn turns out to be immune on account of the fork at d4. 'It was less good to play 17...exf2+ 18 ♗xf2 ♗xc3? 19 bxc3 with the threat of mate on the long diagonal, or 17...♗xc3 18 bxc3! ♘c6 19 ♕xb7 with advantage to White.' (Korchnoi)

18 ♖e1 ♘c6 19 ♖cc1?

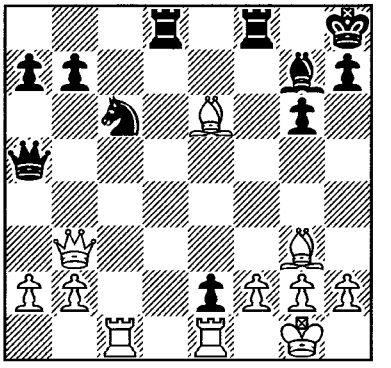
Nevertheless 19 ♗c4 was the lesser evil, although after 19...♖ae8 20 ♖cc1 ♕d2 21 f3 ♘d4 22 ♕d3 ♕g5 the e2-pawn would cause White a mass of problems.

19...♖ad8?

'Here I repeated Furman's mistake – I continued playing for an attack, whereas it was time to follow a more prosaic way: 19...♘d4! 20 ♕d5 *(20 ♕c4 b5! – G.K.)* 20...♕b6 21 ♗g4 ♖ad8 22 ♕c4 ♕xb2 with some advantage to Black.' (Korchnoi)

Too modest an evaluation! After 20...♕d2! 21 ♗e5 ♖ad8 22 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 23 ♕xb7+ ♔h6 White most probably has no defence, for example: 24 ♗b3 ♖de8 (threatening ...♕xc1) 25 ♖b1 ♖xf2 26 ♗g8 (desperation) 26...♖xg8 (or simply 26...♖f1+) 27 ♔xf2 ♖e8 28 ♔g1 ♘c2, and again the game is decided by the e-pawn. Had Black exploited this chance, the game would have become a splendid work of chess art...

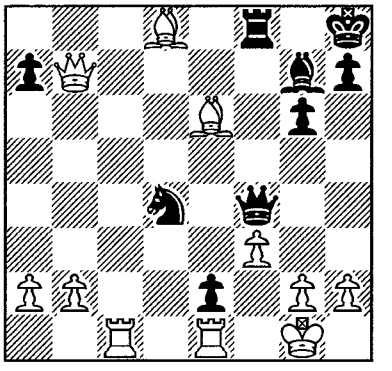
I should add that the immediate 19...♕d2 is less effective in view of 20 ♕e3 ♕xe3 21 fxe3 ♖ae8 22 ♗d7 ♖xe3 23 ♗f2 ♗d4 24 ♗xc6 bxc6 25 b4 ♔g8 26 h3, and although it is not evident how White can disentangle himself, it is also unclear how Black can win. Say, 26...a5 27 bxa5 c5 28 ♖b1 ♖e7 29 ♗xd4 cxd4 30 ♖b3 ♖d8 31 ♖d3 with a probable draw.



20 ♕xb7 (now White has a perfectly acceptable position and even chances of an advantage) **20...♘d4 21 ♗c7 ♕d2 22 ♗xd8 ♕f4**

'The threats look very dangerous, but Furman finds the correct line of play.' (Korchnoi)

23 f3



23...♗e5?

An unsuccessful attempt to maintain the

tension. 23...♖xd8 was essential 'with a complicated and double-edged game' (Korchnoi), for example: 24 ♖c8 ♘xe6 25 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 26 ♕e7 ♗d4+ 27 ♔h1 ♗b6 28 ♕xe2 ♘f7, and although White has a small material advantage, Black should be able to save himself.

24 g3 ♕e3+?!

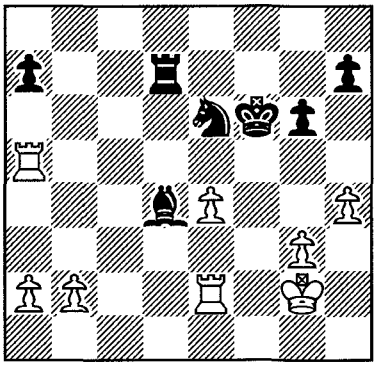
24...♘xf3+? 25 ♔h1 ♕h6 did not work on account of 26 ♗f6+!, but 24...♕xf3 25 ♕xf3 ♘xf3+ 26 ♔g2 ♘xe1+ 27 ♖xe1 ♖xd8 was more tenacious (Korchnoi), although after 28 ♖xe2 Black would have faced an unpleasant defence in an endgame a pawn down.

25 ♔g2 ♘xe6 (of course, not 25...♘xf3? 26 ♗f6+!)

26 ♕e4?

In fearful time-trouble (less than a minute for 15 moves!) Furman hastens to exchange the queens and misses a simple win – 26 ♗e7 ♖f7 (26...♖g8 27 ♕e4) 27 ♕c8+ or 27 ♖c2!

26...♕xe4 27 fxe4 ♖xd8 28 ♖xe2 ♔g7 (Black has managed to restore approximate material equality and consolidate his position) **29 ♖c4 ♔f6 30 ♖a4 ♖d7 31 ♖a5 ♗d4 32 h4 ½-½**



Draw agreed on White's proposal: the rook and couple of pawns are somewhat stronger than the two minor pieces, but... time-trouble!

After this fighting draw Korchnoi gained five successive wins and, with a score of 9½ out of 12, was leading the tournament race! But then Yuri Averbakh, a participant in the recent Candidates tournament in Zürich, plucked up courage and surged ahead. In the final, 19th round, he had Black against Korchnoi... Years later Yuri Lvovich recalled:

'Leading Korchnoi and Taimanov by 1½ points, I was feeling very good-humoured, and I naively assumed that my opponent's mood would be similar: all the same I could not be caught, and he was assured of a share of second place. After Korchnoi employed an improvement, I should have realised that he was not at all peacefully inclined, but I was still in a placid mood and I simply could not summon up any fighting spirit, even when I realised that I was in a lost ending. However, unexpectedly the spectators came to my aid. They were openly supporting the youngest competitor and were not afraid of loudly expressing their sympathy. And when I ended up in a critical position, from the gallery they began chanting in a whisper: "Averbakh, resign! Averbakh, resign!" This acted on me like the call of a battle trumpet, and, gritting my teeth, I began seeking the slightest saving chances. I set myself the objective of not losing before the time control on move 40, in order to adjourn the game and not give pleasure to Korchnoi's most zealous supporters. I fulfilled this minimum objective, by holding out to move 40, but my position remained cheerless. And here I was helped by... Korchnoi himself! Instead of adjourning the game, he decided to finish me off straight away, seeing as he still had time on his clock. But in the heat of the moment he missed a win... The game was adjourned only on the 56th move and agreed drawn without being resumed.'

This is merely one of numerous episodes that reveal Korchnoi's chess character. He did indeed earn general sympathy with his bold and versatile play, and he became one of the heroes of that championship: 1. Averbakh – 14½ out of 19; 2-3. Korchnoi and Taimanov – 13; 4-5. Lisitsyn and Petrosian – 12½; 6. Kholmov – 10½; 7-9. Furman, Nezhmetdinov and Suetin – 10, etc.

'In his person, Soviet chess has a talented

representative with a distinctive style, a fully-fledged candidate for the grandmaster title. In his first appearances Korchnoi introduced himself as a player who was skilled in complications and the calculation of sharp variations, but now, while retaining this valuable quality, he has shown that he can also play in classical positional style. Korchnoi is very young: during the tournament he was not yet 23. This also partly explains the unjustified risks which he took in certain games. And although he was sometimes able to win by these means, he should realise that this is an unreliable way of making further progress,' Alexander Konstantinopolsky wrote in his concluding article.

The fact that this success in the national championship was no accident was confirmed by Viktor a month later, in the first international tournament of his career in Bucharest (1954). Here he faced fierce rivalry from Rashid Nezhmetdinov, an experienced master from Kazan, who set a fast pace from the start. Only after a win against Filip in the 12th round was Korchnoi able to catch the leader. But how difficult a win that was!

'Genuine chess masterpieces are created when a resourceful and clever attack encounters a fierce and inventive defence. Defending is considered a thankless task, although it has its romanticism,' Korchnoi wrote in 1961. 'But masters of defence (Steinitz, Lasker, Nimzowitsch, Botvinnik, Petrosian) have made no less a contribution to chess history than players of attacking style (Morphy, Anderssen, Alekhine, Tal, Geller). My chess tastes are revealed best of all by the following game.'

Game 2

M.Filip-V.Korchnoi

Bucharest 1954, 12th round

Grünfeld Defence D86

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 0-0

One of Korchnoi's bold experiments: instead of the usual move 7...c5 he employs Simagin's difficult variation, where Black first plays ...♘c6 and develops his queenside.

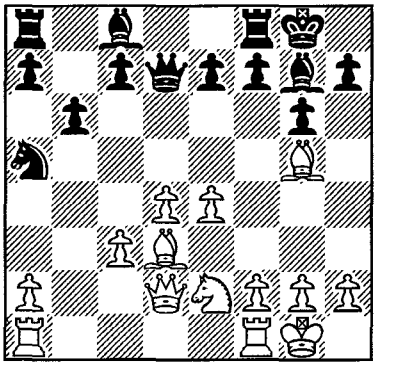
8 ♘e2 ♘c6

Now White retains his powerful centre and is bound to gain an advantage, but it is here that Black's main hope is concealed: demonstrating the advantage demands active play (an axiom formulated long ago by Steinitz), and the opponent may give himself weaknesses – targets for a counterattack!

9 ♗g5!?

'Since Black is not attacking the d4-point, White has the possibility of developing his bishop not at e3, as usual, but rather more actively,' Korchnoi explains. A couple of months earlier, in the USSR Championship, Lilienthal played 9 0-0 against him (9 h4?! – *Volume 3, Game No.61*), and after the moves 9...♕d7 (Korchnoi's patent move; the standard reply is 9...b6) 10 ♗a3?! ♘a5 11 ♗d3 b6 12 ♘f4?! ♗b7 13 ♕e2 ♖fd8 14 ♖ad1 e6 15 e5 c5! 16 dxc5 ♕c7! 17 cxb6?! ♕xe5 18 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 19 ♘e2 axb6 20 ♗c1 ♗d5 Black accurately converted his advantage in the ending.

9...♕d7 (Korchnoi is faithful to his move and is not in a hurry to play 9...♘a5, Kopylov-Simagin, 19th USSR Championship, Moscow 1951) **10 0-0** (10 ♕d2 e5!?) **10...♘a5 11 ♗d3 b6 12 ♕d2**



12...♖d8?!

The same course of complicating the play as much as possible. 'Black, who is playing for a win, deliberately subjects himself to a dan-

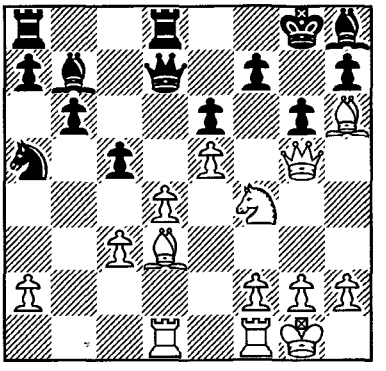
gerous attack, hoping later to gain counterplay in the centre. After 12...c5 13 ♗h6 White would have retained a minimal advantage in a comparatively simple position.' (Korchnoi)

13 ♗h6 ♗h8 14 ♖ad1 ♗b7 15 ♕g5! e6

(preparing ...c7-c5; if immediately 15...c5, then 16 d5) **16 e5!**

Exploiting the weakening of the f6-square. If 16 f4 Black was intending 16...f6 17 ♕g3 f5.

16...c5 17 ♘f4



Filip conducts the game well. All his forces are trained on the kingside, ♘h5-f6+ or h2-h4-h5 is threatened, and for the moment it is not possible to exploit White's weaknesses in the centre (the d5-square and the d4-pawn) and on the queenside (the c4-square). However, Black's position is by no means lost: there is no forced mate, and in the distant future he will have chances of launching a counterattack.

17...cxd4 18 cxd4

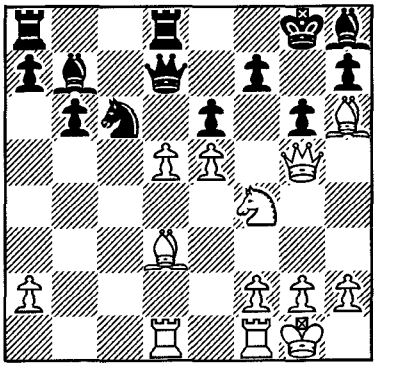
The immediate 18 ♘h5!? came into consideration. Then it is dangerous to play 18...♕d5 19 cxd4! (the queen must not be diverted from the defence of the king), while after 18...f5 19 cxd4 ♕f7 20 ♘f4 to avoid the worst Black would have had to exchange the dark-squared bishops – 20...♗g7 21 ♗xg7 ♔xg7, but with 22 ♗e2 followed by h2-h4 White would have retained a clear initiative. All the same, the weakening of the black king's defences is more important than all other factors!

However, after the move in the game White also has powerful pressure. But it is on such micro-nuances that the result of a game usually depends...

18...♘c6 19 d5!

A typical breakthrough. 'The simple 19 ♗b5 would have been very strong. After 19...a6 it is true that 20 ♘h5 does not work because of 20...f6!, when Black easily defends, but after 20 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 21 f3 the threat of ♘h5-f6 forces Black to play ...f7-f5. After the possible 21...♖d7 22 ♘h5 f5 23 ♘f4, in view of h2-h4-h5 Black has a difficult position.' (Korchnoi). Say, 23...♕c4 24 h4 ♔f7 25 h5 ♖g8 26 hxg6+ (26 a3!? ♖xd4? 27 ♖c1!, when both 27...♕a4 28 ♖c7+ ♖d7 29 ♗g7!!, and 27...♕b5 28 ♗f8!! or 28 hxg6+ hxg6 29 ♗g7!! are bad for Black) 26...hxg6 27 ♕h4 ♖xd4 28 ♗f8!! or 27...♕xa2 28 ♗g5 with a terribly strong attack.

However, in the event of 21...♕c2! 22 ♕e7! (22 h4 ♕f5) 22...♗d5! 23 ♖c1 ♕a4 24 ♖c7 ♕xd4+ 25 ♔h1 ♖f8 26 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 27 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 28 f4 ♕xa2 White's advantage might not be sufficient for a win.



19...exd5

After 19...♘xe5 (19...♗xe5? 20 dxc6) 20 dxe6 ♕c7! (Korchnoi) the decisive role would be played by White's mobile passed pawn. He has more than one way of developing his initiative:

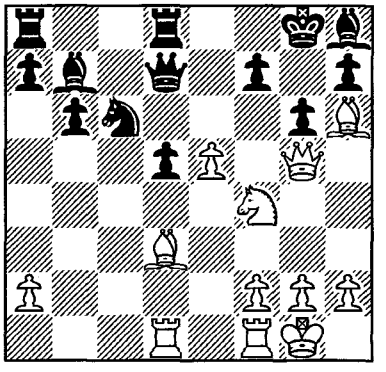
1) 21 ♖fe1 ♘xd3 22 e7! ♖e8 23 ♖xd3 ♖ac8 24 h4, or 21...f6 22 ♕g3 ♗g7 23 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 24 ♗b5 ♖xd1 25 ♖xd1 ♕e7 26 ♗d7 ♖d8 27 ♕c3 ♘xd7 28 ♕c7 ♗c6 29 h3!! (V.Belov)

29...♔g7 (29...♔f8 30 ♖d6! g5 31 ♘e2! or 29...♕e8 30 ♘d5! ♔g7 31 ♕xc6 ♘e5 32 ♕c7+ ♔h6 33 f4 ♘c6 34 ♘xf6! etc. is no better for Black) 30 ♖d6! ♖c8 31 ♖xc6 ♖xc7 32 ♖xc7 ♔f8 33 ♖c8+! ♔g7 34 exd7 ♕xd7 35 ♖c7! with a very pretty win;

2) 21 ♗f5 ♖xd1?! 22 ♖xd1 ♖e8 (22...f6 23 ♕g3 ♗g7 24 ♘xg6! hxg6 25 ♖d7!) 23 h4! ♗f3 24 ♖d7! or 21...f6 22 ♕g3 ♗g7 (22...♕e7? 23 ♗xg6!) 23 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 24 ♗c2 ♕e7 25 ♗b3 with an enduring advantage;

3) 21 ♗b5 f6 22 ♕g3 ♕e7 (22...a6 23 ♗d7 or 22...♗g7 23 ♗xg7 ♕xg7 24 ♕a3! is also bad for Black) 23 ♖d7! ♘xd7 24 exd7 (threatening ♘xg6) 24...♗g7 25 ♕b3+ ♔h8 26 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 27 ♘e6+ ♔h8 28 ♘xd8 ♖xd8 29 ♕c3! (with the threat of ♖e1) 29...♕d6 (29...♕e5 30 ♕xe5 fxe5 31 f4! e4 32 ♖c1 and ♖c7 is also hopeless) 30 ♖e1 ♔g7 31 ♕e3 and wins.

Of course, such a prospect did not appeal to Korchnoi, and he preferred to eliminate the dangerous pawn.



20 ♗b5?

At first sight, the most natural move: both 21 ♘xd5 and 21 e6 fxe6 22 ♘xg6 are threatened. However, the bishop is diverted from the kingside, and therefore other ways should have been sought:

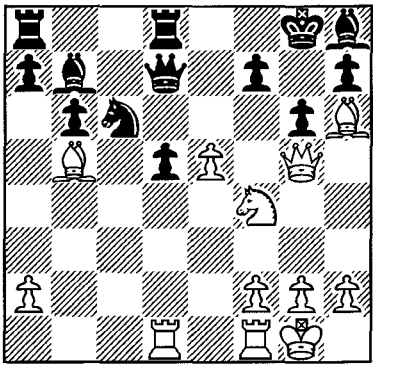
1) 20 ♘h5 ♕e7 (20...♕e6 21 f4) 21 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 22 exf6 ♕e5 23 ♕h4! ♖e8 (23...♕h5 24 ♕xh5 gxh5 25 f4! is also insufficient) 24 ♗g5 h5 25 ♗f4 ♕e6 (25...♕b2 26 ♗xg6!) 26 ♕g5, or 24...♘d4 25 ♕h6 ♘e6 26 f4! ♕e3+ 27 ♔h1 (with the threat of ♖e1 and ♖xe6) 27...♕c5 28 f5 ♕f8 29 fxe6 ♕xh6 30 exf7+ ♔xf7 31 ♗xh6 and wins;

2) 20 e6 ♕e7 21 exf7+ ♕xf7 22 ♘xg6! (Korchnoi suggested 22 ♖fe1, but 22...♘e5! parries the attack: 23 ♖xe5 ♗f6 24 ♖f5 ♗xg5 25 ♖xf7 ♗xh6 26 ♖xb7 ♗xf4 with a roughly equal endgame) 22...hxg6 23 ♗xg6 ♕e7. Because of this move Korchnoi considered the knight sacrifice to be premature, but after 24 ♕h5! White has a very strong attack: he is threatening ♖fe1, and ♖d3-g3, and the advance of the f-pawn. For example:

a) 24...♗e5?! 25 f4 ♗d4+ 26 ♖xd4 ♘xd4 27 ♗g5 ♕g7 28 f5 or 27...♘e2+ 28 ♔h1 ♘xf4 29 ♗xf4 ♖f8 30 h3! d4 (30...♕g7 31 ♖f3) 31 ♗c2! and wins;

b) 24...♘e5 25 f4 ♘xg6 26 ♕xg6+ ♗g7 27 ♖fe1 ♖d6 28 ♕xg7+ ♕xg7 29 ♗xg7, and White's three connected passed pawns should decide the outcome in his favour.

The question suggests itself: does this mean that Black's entire strategy was incorrect? Objectively, yes. However, it must be borne in mind that this game was played at the dawn of the Grünfeld Defence's development, and a complicated, little-studied position had arisen. The consequences of the piece sacrifice no doubt seemed far from obvious to Filip (this was still in the pre-Tal era!) and, with the aim of clarifying the situation as soon as possible, he chose a quieter continuation, which seemed like the optimal solution to the problem.



20...♗xe5!!

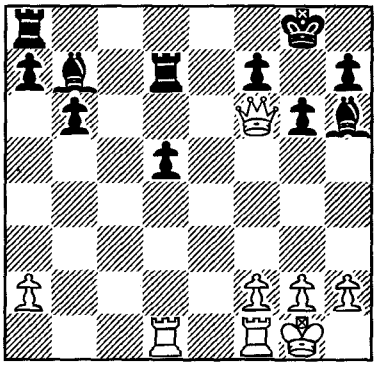
You don't have to be a Tal, in order after 20...d4? 21 e6 ♕e7 22 exf7+ ♕xf7 to calculate the combinative blow 23 ♗c4! ♕xc4 24 ♘xg6 and wins. But you have to be a Korchnoi, in order to find 20...♗xe5!! This looks like a blunder, but in fact it is a quite paradoxical queen sacrifice.

21 ♗xc6 (21 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 22 ♗xc6 ♗xh2+! or 22 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 23 ♗xc6 ♗xh2+! is unfavourable for White) **21...♗xf4 22 ♕f6**

Mate is threatened, and the queen is hanging – many players with Black, on seeing this position from afar, would simply have stopped their calculations. But Korchnoi subtly appreciated that the sacrifice of his queen for two bishops and two pawns gives good counter-chances.

22...♗xh6 23 ♗xd7 ♖xd7

'Black's compensation for the queen is rather slight, but the character of the position has changed. Instead of an attack on the king, White is faced with solving difficult problems.' (Korchnoi). Indeed, it is hard for his rooks to invade the enemy position (the bishops prevent this), and most important – they are restricted by the passed d-pawn. Moreover, in blockading this pawn, a rook will come under attack by one of the bishops.



24 ♖fe1 ♗f8!

Preventing ♖e7: any exchange is to White's advantage, since the power of the queen is sharply increased. A similar situation occurred in a game of mine with Karpov (3rd match-game, New York 1990), where I sacrificed my queen for two minor pieces and a pawn: my opponent also had to exchange pieces, even at the cost of material...

25 h4?!

Routinely played, but with the dark-squared bishop on the board the attack with h2-h4-h5 has no point. 25 ♖d3 with the threat of ♖de3-e8 was correct, when Black, to prevent the exchange of rooks, would have to play 25...♗b4!? (Korchnoi). It is clear that White's chances are better; the question is how much.

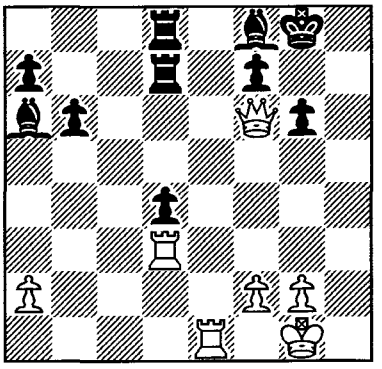
25...♖ad8 26 h5?!

Had Filip looked a little into the future, he would have realised that the pawn should be immediately blockaded by 26 ♖d4!, since after 26...♗g7 27 ♕f4 the immediate exchange 27...♗xd4 28 ♕xd4 is dangerous for Black in view of the weakening of his king's defences. However, the cool-headed 27...h5 would have maintained an unclear position. To exploit the power of his queen, White would have had to play g2-g4, and this is a rather committing decision.

But through inertia Filip made the 'attacking' move 26 h5?! A typical situation when a player, after gaining an advantage, did not find the correct plan and allowed his opponent to change the direction of the play with the help of an unexpected sacrifice. Such turning points are normally unsettling, and in such a state it is not easy to find the strongest moves. This is the main danger when facing players such as Korchnoi, who sense such psychological nuances very keenly and do not miss an opportunity to launch a counterattack.

26...d4 (after this move White now has to play accurately to keep the balance) **27 hxg6 hxg6 28 ♖d3 ♗a6**

It is not just that Black has succeeded in advancing his passed pawn – now, in the event of the exchange of rook for bishop, he will retain his dark-squared bishop, which apart from anything else is performing the important role of defending his king.



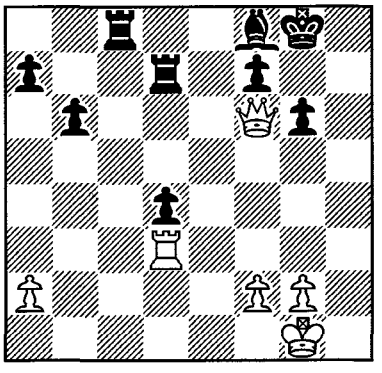
29 ♖ed1?

With time-trouble approaching, Filip completely loses the thread of the game and gives up the exchange. According to Korchnoi, White could have drawn without difficulty by 29 ♖h3 ♗g7 30 ♕c6 (or 30 ♕h4 d3 – you can't frighten Korchnoi with a single check on h7!) 30...d3 31 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 32 ♕xd7 ♗b5! 33 ♕xb5 ♖e1+ 34 ♔h2 d2 35 ♖d3 d1♕ 36 ♖xd1 ♖xd1 37 ♕a6 ♖d5 38 ♕xa7 ♖a5 and ...♖xa2.

29...♗xd3 30 ♖xd3

'A position has been reached with a minimal advantage for Black. The end of the game took place in a severe time scramble, and I managed to outwit my opponent.' (Korchnoi)

30...♖c8

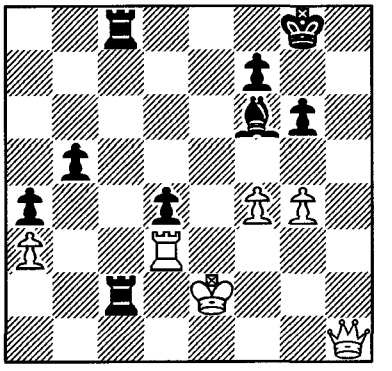


Black has excellent material compensation for the queen – rook, bishop, a couple of pawns and a well-fortified king. His plan includes creating another passed pawn on the queenside. Even so, this may not be sufficient for a win. It is not our objective to ascertain the exact evaluation of this endgame, but it is interesting to observe the energy and resourcefulness with which Korchnoi conducts the technical stage of the game.

31 ♕f3

Perhaps the best practical chance of saving the game was to go into a rook ending a pawn down – 31 ♖xd4 ♗g7 32 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 33 ♖xd7 (Korchnoi), although after 33...♖c1+ 34 ♔h2 a5 it is hard for White to exchange his a-pawn for the b-pawn and Black most probably has a technically won position.

31...♗g7 32 ♕e4 ♖cd8 33 f4 ♖d5 34 g4 ♗f6 35 ♔g2 ♔f8 36 ♔f3 b5 37 ♕e1 ♔g8 38 ♕b4 ♖8d7 39 ♕b3?! a5 40 a3 ♖c5 41 ♕b1 ♖dc7 42 ♔e2 a4 43 ♕h1 ♖7c6 44 ♕b1 ♖c8 45 ♕h1 ♖c2+



46 ♖d2

After 46 ♔f3 there is a choice between the sharp 46...b4 47 axb4 a3, and if 48 ♖xa3, then 48...♖2c3+ 49 ♖xc3 dxc3 (Korchnoi), and the quiet 46...♖c1.

46...♖e8+ 47 ♔d1 ♖c3 48 ♕d5

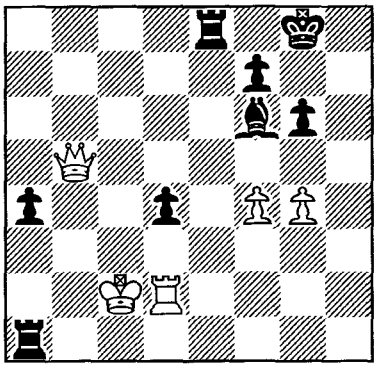
'48 g5 was more tenacious. In this case the attempt by Black to win at once by 48...d3? would not have worked: 49 gxf6 ♖xa3 50 ♖a2 ♖xa2 51 ♕h6 and it is White who wins.' (Korchnoi). But after 48...♖xa3 Black would have retained a decisive advantage.

48...♖xa3 49 ♕xb5

Hanging over White, like a sword of Damocles, is the threat of ...d4-d3: 49 g5 d3! or

49 ♕c6 ♖a1+ 50 ♔c2 d3+! etc.

49...♖a1+ 50 ♔c2

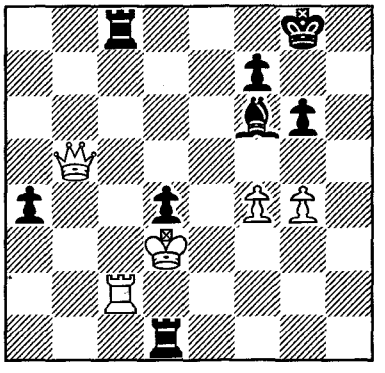


50...♖c8+

According to Korchnoi, 50...♖e3 was simpler, with the threat of 51...d3+ 52 ♖xd3 ♖e2+, for example: 51 ♕d5 ♖c3+ 52 ♔b2 d3, or 51 ♕b8+ ♔g7 52 g5 d3+ 53 ♖xd3 ♖e2+ 54 ♖d2 ♖a2+ 55 ♔c1 ♗b2+! 56 ♖xb2 ♖axb2, and further resistance is pointless.

51 ♔d3 ♖e1 (51...a3! was winning) **52 ♖c2?!** (52 ♖a2 really was better) **52...♖d1+**

52...♖xc2 53 ♔xc2 a3 followed by ...a3-a2 would also have won.



53 ♔e2?

A blunder, but Korchnoi's recommendation of 53 ♖d2 ♖c3+ 54 ♔e2 would also not have helped in view of 54...♖h1! with the decisive threat of 55...♖e3+ 56 ♔f2 ♖h2+.

53...d3+ 54 ♔xd1 dxc2+ 55 ♔c1 a3 56 ♕a6 ♗b2+ 0-1

Going into the final round the two main rivals were level, and here Viktor was helped by his compatriot Furman, who defeated Nezhmetdinov. This decided the outcome of the tournament: 1. Korchnoi – 13 out of 17; 2. Nezhmetdinov – 12½; 3-4. Filip and Kholmov – 11, etc.

At that time the qualifying rules were severe: although he was a silver medal winner in the national championship and a newly-fledged international master, to reach the next, 22nd USSR Championship (a world championship Zonal!) he again had to overcome the semi-final barrier. In the first round of the final (Moscow 1955), Korchnoi encountered problems with Black against Simagin in his favourite Grünfeld Defence, conducted a difficult defence, and then analysed the adjourned position for two days, but on the resumption he was unable to save it. For a long time this painful defeat left Viktor in a state of psychological shock. The outcome was 19th place, last but one...

However, soon he showed that this was an accidental failure. First he was successful in the next USSR Championship semi-final – in these tournaments Korchnoi's play was uncommonly stable: eight years in a row he took one of the qualifying places (twice finishing first). Then for the first time he became Leningrad Champion (17 out of 19), shared victory with Olafsson in the traditional Hastings tournament (1955/56) and performed worthily in the 23rd USSR Championship: 1-3. Averbakh, Spassky and Taimanov – 11½ out of 17; 4. Korchnoi – 11; 5-7. Kholmov, Polugayevsky and Tal – 10½, etc.

After finally gaining the grandmaster title, Viktor took something of a respite: in the next three championships of the country he occupied modest places in the middle of the tournament table. However, with striking wins in individual games he as though warned the chess world: the day is not far off when the genie will escape from the bottle!

In previous volumes I have already talked

about the Zonal USSR Championship of 1958, which brought a brilliant triumph for Tal and a bitter disappointment for Spassky. But even on the threshold of his finest hour the 'Riga magician' was unable to solve the Korchnoi problem, losing to him in the middle of the tournament. Incidentally, after this setback Tal finished with 8 out of 9(!).

It is well known that, for Tal, Korchnoi was the most difficult and awkward opponent – the only player in the world against whom, after becoming champion and even ex-champion of the world, he had not won a single game, while losing five with five draws! For many years afterwards too, the character of their chess relations did not change. Before their Candidates semi-final match in 1968 the score in their decisive games was 9-1 in Korchnoi's favour, and after the match it became 11-2. And only towards the end of their rivalry, in the mid-1980s, did Tal manage to improve slightly on this catastrophic balance.

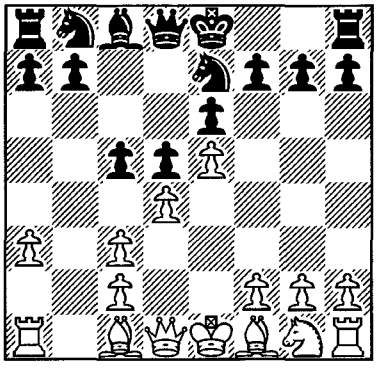
It was probably Korchnoi's 'crooked' style that did not allow Tal to dictate matters in games with him, as when playing other opponents. Tal liked to sacrifice and seize the initiative, but this did not bother Korchnoi: he happily took 'everything that was going', defended tenaciously, and at the first opportunity launched a counterattack. And the main thing – he did not lose his head in the face of Tal's fierce onslaught! The game between them from that Championship, despite the mutual mistakes and inaccuracies, is very typical of the rivalry between Tal and Korchnoi in the 1950s-1960s. It was a fierce clash of two diametrically opposed chess conceptions – attacking and defensive.

Game 3
M.Tal-V.Korchnoi
25th USSR Championship,
Riga 1958, 9th round
French Defence C18

1 e4 e6

Korchnoi's favourite reply to 1 e4, to which he retains a devotion even today. Many of his brilliant tournament and match victories are associated with the French Defence.

2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 (3 ♘d2 – *Game Nos.13, 52 and 53*) **3...♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7**



Botvinnik's favourite plan. Korchnoi, who picked up and developed his ideas, very successfully handled this complicated and unbalanced position, where there is a basic conflict: White has the two bishops and a powerful centre, but on the other hand he has chronic weaknesses on the queenside, which are obvious targets for Black's counterplay. At that time such double-edged schemes were an ideal weapon for a player with a counterattacking style.

7 ♕g4 (7 a4 – *Game Nos.12, 22 and 23*) **7...♘f5**

Later Korchnoi played only 7...♕c7 or 7...cxd4 (*Game Nos.14 and 27*), as well as 7...0-0! By his own admission, he employed the knight move 'only once in my life – with the aim of catching Tal in a prepared variation.' And he caught him!

8 ♗d3 h5 9 ♕h3

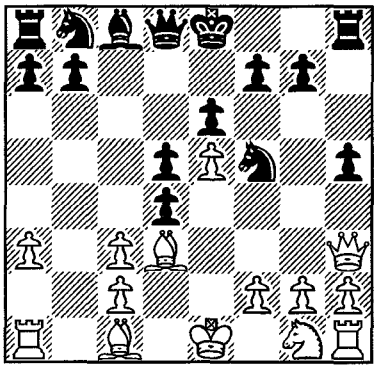
It stands to reason that Tal repeats the game that he won against Petrosian (24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957), although he had also employed 9 ♕f4! (against Erepova, Riga 1953). In that case he may not have liked the exchange of queens after

9...♕h4 (the current fashion is for 9...♕c7!?) 10 ♘e2 ♕xf4 11 ♘xf4 ♘e7 (Bisguier-Fine, New York 1948). Here White has somewhat the better endgame, but as Korchnoi wrote many years ago, 'evidently this positional continuation is not at all to the taste of the temperamental Tal.'

It is curious how tastes change: the later Tal preferred to go into this endgame against Petrosian (50th USSR Championship, Moscow 1983), although he was unable to realise the advantages of his position... For more details about 9 ♕f4!, see the game Stein-Petrosian, brilliantly won by White (*Volume 3, Game No.56*). However, 9 ♕h3 does not yet spoil anything.

9...cxd4

The critical position of the variation.



10 ♘f3?!

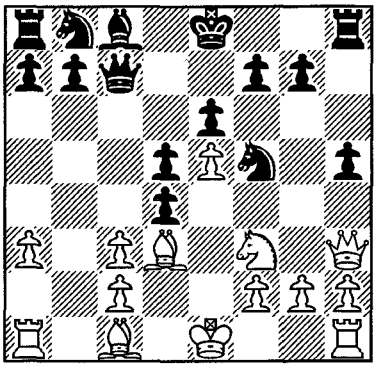
But this is too devil-may-care! White's chances are mainly associated with disclosing the weakness of the dark squares in the opponent's position, for example: 10 ♘e2 dxc3 11 ♗xf5 exf5 12 ♕g3, or immediately 10 ♗xf5 exf5 11 cxd4 (if 11 ♕g3 Euwe suggested 11...♗e6 12 ♕xg7?! ♔d7 and ...♖g8; 11...g6 12 cxd4 ♘c6 13 ♘f3(e2) h4! and 14...h3 is also not so clear) 11...♘c6 12 ♘e2 ♕a5+ 13 ♗d2 ♕b5 14 ♕e3, and Black still has to solve the problem of evacuating his king.

Instead of this White initiates play on both flanks, in particular planning the aggressive g2-g4. But in the process his king is deprived of a secure shelter and Black acquires excellent counter-chances. The young Tal believed implicitly in his lucky star, which Korchnoi exploited, demonstrating a subtle understanding of his opponent's psychology. After all, in the majority of positions you must make objectively the best moves, and not those that correspond to your style or frame of mind. Especially if the latter are obviously expected by your opponent!

10...♕c7!

An important improvement – a gain of tempo. In the previous year's USSR Championship Tal had breached the defences of 'iron Tigran' after 10...♘c6?! 11 g4 ♘fe7 12 gxh5! ♕c7 (12...♕a5!?) 13 ♗f4 ♘g6 14 ♕g4 ♘xf4 15 ♕xf4 dxc3 16 ♕g5! etc. Alternatively 10...dxc3 11 g4 ♘e7 12 gxh5 is no better for Black, while if 10...♕a5 there would probably have followed 11 ♖b1 (11 0-0!?) 11...♕xc3+ (11...dxc3 12 g4) 12 ♗d2 ♕xa3 13 g4 (the positional 13 0-0 with the idea 14 ♗xf5 exf5 15 ♕g3 is again good) 13...♘e7 14 gxh5 (14 ♘xd4 a6 is less clear) followed by ♖g1 – such positions with active rooks and an enduring initiative very much appealed to Tal.

From c7 the queen both attacks the enemy pawns (c3 and in particular e5) and also prophylactically defends the b7-pawn in anticipation of ...♘bc6, ...♗d7 and ...0-0-0. However, in fact neither side manages to castle – another indication of the high intensity of the struggle that prevailed in this game.



11 ♖b1 (11 0-0 did not fit in with the planned g2-g4) **11...dxc3**

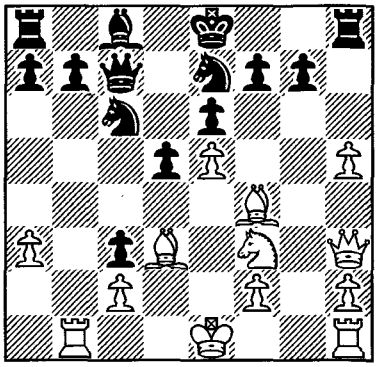
There was no great point in playing 11...♕xc3+ 12 ♗d2 and g2-g4 (as after 10...♕a5). However, 11...♘c6!? was also acceptable: 12 g4 ♘fe7 13 cxd4 ♘xd4 14 ♘xd4 ♕c3+ 15 ♗d2 ♕xd4 16 f4 (Konstantinopolsky-Ivashin, correspondence 1948) 16...♗d7 with an unclear game.

12 g4 ♘e7 13 gxh5

This may become a dangerous passed pawn if White, by creating pressure on the g-file, is able to capture on g7 or force ...g7-g6. But Black requires only two more moves to castle queenside, his pieces are compactly placed, and he has a material advantage and counterplay against the e5-pawn.

13...♘bc6 14 ♗f4

Apparently the best move. 'This position is reached in his book by Keres, who judges it to be in White's favour, since, in his opinion, the g7-pawn is bound to be lost. The present game shows that the situation is highly double-edged,' writes Korchnoi, who refutes 14 ♕g3?! ♖xh5 15 ♕xg7 ♘xe5 16 ♘g5 ♘xd3+ 17 cxd3 ♘g6 18 ♕g8+ ♘f8 19 f4 f6, winning, and considers that 14 ♔d1 (with the idea of 14...♘xe5 15 ♕g3) comes into consideration, although, in my view, after the simple 14...♗d7 and ...0-0-0 White has no real compensation for the disintegration of his centre and the insecure position of his king.



14...♘g6!

This resource, prepared at home, was overlooked by Keres in his analysis: Black nevertheless gets to the e5-pawn which is cramping his game. After 14...g6?! 15 h6 ♘f5 16 0-0 ♘ce7 17 h7 ♘g7 18 ♘g5 White would have retained the initiative.

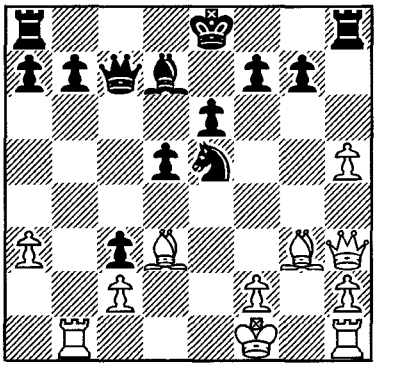
15 ♗g3 (the bishop exchange 15 ♗xg6 fxg6 would have signified the failure of White's plan) **15...♘gxe5**

Now, in order to justify his audacious play in the opening, Tal has to display miracles of resourcefulness.

16 ♘xe5

'White incorrectly restricts his range of possibilities. It was fundamentally more correct to move the king without exchanging knights – 16 ♔f1.' (Korchnoi). However, after 16...f6 White faces difficult problems: 17 ♗b5 ♗d7 18 ♗xc6 (Korchnoi) 18...♕xc6! 19 ♗xe5 0-0-0!, and 20 ♗g3(d4) is not possible on account of 20...e5 with a decisive counterattack. Therefore Tal's move should hardly be condemned.

16...♘xe5 17 ♔f1 (17 ♔d1? ♘xd3!) **17...♗d7** (17...f6?! 18 ♖g1!)



18 ♕h4?

'The activation of the queen is a significant mistake, which could have placed White in a difficult position. He should have played 18 ♖e1, and after 18...f6 19 ♗g6+ wherever the king moves White retains the initiative.' (Korchnoi). For example: 19...♔d8 20 ♔g2 with the threat of 21 ♖xe5! fxe5 22 ♖e1 and

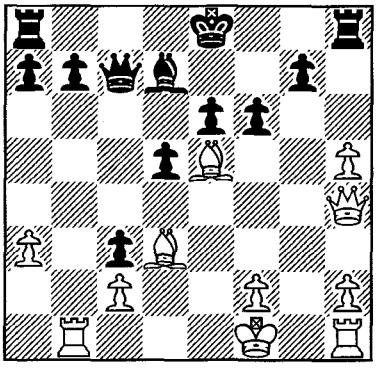
♗xe5xg7, opening the way for the h-pawn.

18...f6?

The immediate breakthrough in the centre – 18...d4 is also ineffective in view of 19 ♖g1! (but not 19 ♕xd4 ♕c6 20 ♗e4 ♕c4+ 21 ♕xc4 ♘xc4 22 ♗xb7 ♖d8) 19...♕c5 20 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 21 ♖g5 ♕f6 22 ♖xb7 ♗c6 23 ♖c7 with substantial compensation for the pawn, or 19...♘f3 20 ♗xc7 ♘xh4 21 ♖xg7 ♗c6 22 ♗f4! (again relying on the passed h-pawn) 22...♔e7 (22...♖d8 23 h6; 22...♘f3 23 ♗e2!? and ♖g3) 23 ♗g5+ ♔f8 24 ♗f6 ♘f3 (24...♖xh5 25 ♗h7!) 25 ♖g3 with a double-edged endgame.

However, in Korchnoi's opinion, 'White's previous move could have been punished by the powerful tactical stroke 18...♘f3!, since the complications after 19 ♕b4 ♕c6 *(19...e5!? – G.K.)* or 19 ♕g4 ♘d2+ 20 ♔g2(e2) e5 21 ♕xg7 0-0-0 are clearly in Black's favour.' 19 h6! is stronger, retaining the tension on the kingside. Thus in the event of 19...g5?! 20 ♕h5 (20 ♕g4!?) 20...♘d2+ 21 ♔g2 ♕c6 (21...♕c5 22 ♖xb7) 22 ♗b5 ♕c8 23 ♕xg5 White's attack fully compensates for his material deficit. But after 19...♘xh4! 20 hxg7 0-0-0! 21 gxh8♕ ♖xh8 22 ♗xc7 ♔xc7 Black has two pawns for the exchange and the better ending.

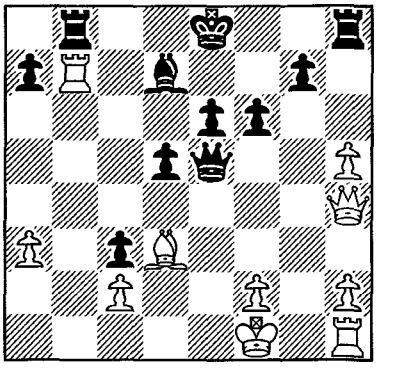
19 ♗xe5! (now Tal's bold idea proves justified)



19...♕xe5

After 19...fxe5 20 ♗g6+ ♔f8 21 ♕b4+ ♔g8 22 ♕xb7 (Korchnoi) White has a comfortable game: it is not clear how Black can bring his h8-rook into play (if 22...♕c6, then 23 ♖g1).

20 ♖xb7 ♖b8! (exchanging the menacing rook on the 7th rank; 20...g5? 21 ♕b4!)

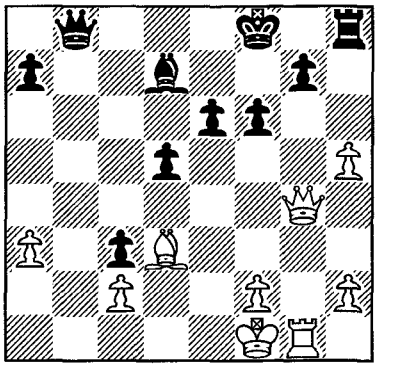


21 ♖xb8+

'Interposing 21 f4 came into consideration.' (Korchnoi). Then after 21...♕d6 22 ♖xb8+ ♕xb8 23 ♕g4 it is no longer good to play 23...♔f8? 24 ♖g1, but 23...f5! 24 ♕g5 (24 ♕xg7? ♕xf4+ 25 ♔g2 ♕h6 and wins) 24...♗b5! is possible, with advantage to Black.

21...♕xb8 22 ♕g4 (after 22 ♖g1?! Korchnoi was intending 22...g5, but 22...♗b5 is also strong) **22...♔f8 23 ♖g1**

Continuing to build up threats, which look rather dangerous: Black has not yet coordinated his pieces.



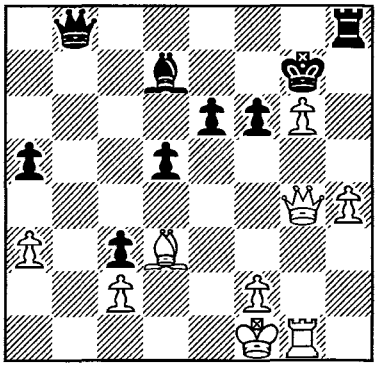
23...g5!

'The only defence, but quite sufficient. Black returns the last of the sacrificed pawns, but his king finds a comfortable shelter at g7.' (Korchnoi)

24 hxg6!

I do not think that 'it was more correct to go into a roughly equal endgame' – 24 h4 ♕f4 25 hxg5 ♕xg4 26 ♖xg4 (Korchnoi), since after 26...e5! White would have faced a difficult struggle for a draw: 27 ♖g3 ♖xh5 28 gxf6 ♖h3!, or 27 ♖b4 ♖xh5 28 ♖b8+ ♔e7 29 ♖b7 ♔d6 30 gxf6 e4 31 ♗e2 ♖h7, and if 32 ♗g4, then 32...d4 33 ♗xd7 d3! and Black wins.

24...♔g7 25 h4 a5



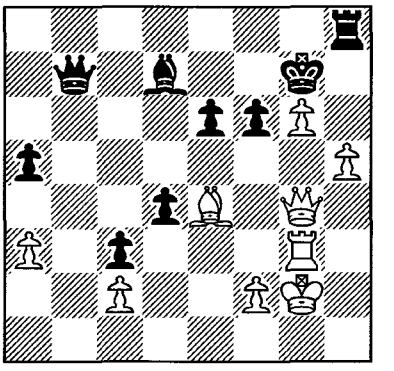
'A useful prophylactic move, preventing a possible invasion of the white queen into Black's position via b4. Generally speaking, Black must now watch carefully, to safeguard his rear against the penetration of the white queen.' (Korchnoi). 25...♕d6 or 25...♕b7 is also worth studying.

26 ♖g3 ♕b1+ 27 ♔g2

If 27 ♔e2 Black was planning 27...♗b5 with the exchange of bishops, although after 28 ♗xb5 ♕xb5+ 29 ♔f3 both sides have chances. More would appear to be promised by 27...♕b7!? with the idea of ...e6-e5.

27...♕b7 28 h5 d4+ (also after 28...e5 29 ♗f5 d4+ 30 ♔h2 the position is roughly equal) **29 ♗e4**

According to Korchnoi, 29 f3 ♕d5 30 ♖h3 e5 31 ♗f5 ♗xf5 32 ♕xf5 d3! is bad for White, although 33 cxd3 c2 34 ♖h1 leads to a draw, for example: 34...♕d4 35 ♖c1 ♕b2 36 h6+! ♖xh6 37 ♕d7+ with perpetual check.

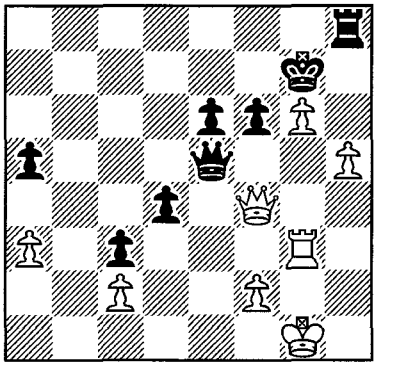


29...♗c6

Korchnoi called this move a mistake, suggesting that 29...♕b5 30 ♖h3 ♕g5 31 ♕xg5 fxg5 would have led to a 'complicated rook and bishop ending with considerable difficulties for White.' But after 32 ♖h1! and ♖b1 his chances are even somewhat better.

Thus, starting from the 19th move, attack and defence have balanced each other and the most logical outcome would have been a draw. But Tal, as often happened with him after a favourable turn of events, was no longer thinking just of maintaining equality, but of winning! And he overstepped the mark...

30 ♗xc6 ♕xc6+ 31 ♔g1 ♕d5 32 ♕f4 ♕e5



33 h6+??

In time-trouble Tal imagined that he saw a 'winning combination', which has a simple refutation. He could have drawn by 33 ♕f3! ♕d5 34 ♕f4 (or 34 ♕xd5 exd5) 34...♕e5 35 ♕f3 with a repetition of moves.

33...♖xh6 34 ♕xh6+ ♔xh6 35 g7 ♕xg3+ 0-1

A dramatic game!

Their duel in the next national championship had a similar outcome. Korchnoi again had Black and this time he outwitted his opponent in a Sicilian Defence, employing the Najdorf Variation. He again withstood that intense pressure, which proved unbearable for many other opponents of the young Tal. This is how Viktor Vasiliev characterised the two chess antipodes:

'Korchnoi's style is Tal's style, as though turned inside out. Tal always strives to seize the initiative, whereas Korchnoi is ready to concede it without regret. Tal likes to attack, Korchnoi to defend. Tal plays especially confidently with White, Korchnoi with Black. Tal himself, half-jokingly, half-seriously, calls his constant failures a protracted case of "Korchnoi-fear", but the reason probably lies elsewhere. Apparently, Korchnoi's counterattacking style with its inexhaustible defensive resources and tenacious striving to upset the balance enables him to steadfastly withstand Tal's attacks.'

We should not forget that at that time the Riga grandmaster was accomplishing a magical surge to the chess summit and was practically irresistible. Korchnoi alone was able successfully to withstand the new star, and this fact gives some impression as to the strength of his play at the end of the 1950s.

After the 25th USSR Championship Mikhail Yudovich tried to give a more concrete evaluation of his style: 'Korchnoi's play is characterised by bold experiments, distinctive positional evaluation, and an original treatment of strategic problems, especially his resourcefulness and tenacity in the defence of difficult positions. Korchnoi did not achieve any great competitive successes in the tournament, on account of a certain "slovenliness" in the technical stage of the game, and also because his originality in the handling of certain opening variations was sometimes transformed into affectation, conflicting with the demands of the position. Korchnoi is a player of great potential, and he should strive to ensure that his creative bursts do not come into conflict with the rigid practice of tournament play. There is no doubt that he should also try and get rid of his customary time-troubles.'

I don't know whether Viktor Lvovich read these lines, but very soon, despite his 'customary' time-troubles, his results sharply improved...

First Gold

The peak of the early period of Korchnoi's career came in the 27th USSR Championship (Leningrad, January-February 1960), where he finally won the first of his four gold medals. Players of the older generation remember the incredible intensity of the struggle in the Soviet Championships and the star-studded fields, with which few international tournaments could compare. The title of USSR Champion was highly valued: for many years it was a kind of admission to the elite of world chess.

Playing in his native city, Viktor was initially rather nervous and found it difficult to get into his best form: he lost to Lutikov, shared the point with Taimanov, defeated Sakharov in his patent counterattacking style (again the Najdorf Variation in the Sicilian Defence!), then Nei and Smyslov, but lost to Simagin – and after six rounds he was a point behind the leader Petrosian.

The turning point came in an uncommonly dramatic and intriguing game with Leonid Shamkovich. The 'miracle' that occurred in it seems to be straightforward luck, but, knowing the essence of Korchnoi's play, his very approach to chess, one can find not a mystical,

but a fully rational explanation of the events that occurred in the nervy atmosphere during play. This is what Tal and his second Koblents wrote about this game:

'It is quite clear: to be a devoted "fan" of Korchnoi, in particular you need iron nerves and a heart of steel. These qualities were especially needed by the Leningrad public, when their favourite met the Moscow master Shamkovich. After stunning the grandmaster in the opening with an interesting pawn sacrifice, Shamkovich quickly seized the initiative, and soon the storm clouds were gathering over the black position. Korchnoi, as usual, was resisting desperately, but the Muscovite already had his opponent in a "full nelson". The arbiters were ready to register the moment when the grandmaster's shoulders touched the mat...'

Game 4
L.Shamkovich-V.Korchnoi
27th USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1960, 7th round
Nimzo-Indian Defence E25

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6

This avoidance of the Grünfeld Defence was possibly provoked by a fear of some prepared variation by the opponent – a prominent theoretician, known for his deep and unusual approach to the solving of opening problems. However, in his 'reserve paths' Korchnoi goes, so to speak, from the frying pan into the fire.

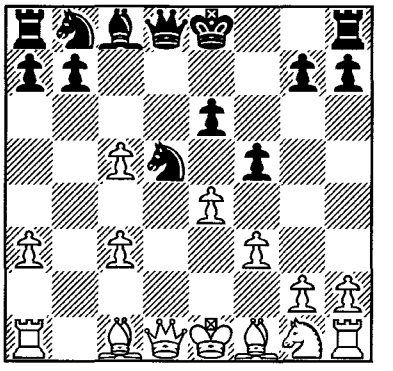
3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 a3 (the aggressive Sämisch Variation) **4...♗xc3+ 5 bxc3 c5 6 f3!?** (6 e3 is examined in the previous volumes)

6...d5 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 dxc5 f5

8...♕a5 9 e4 ♘f6 or 9...♘e7(c7) is solid, as played by Smyslov, but not 9...♕xc3+?! 10 ♗d2 ♕e5 11 ♘e2 with the initiative for White (Korchnoi-Bykov, Leningrad 1957).

9 e4!?

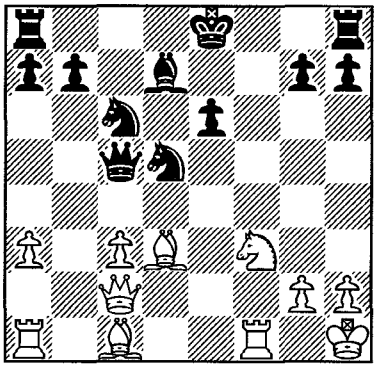
'An unexpected novelty, which apparently unsettled Korchnoi.' (Tal)



9...fxe4 10 ♕c2 exf3?

This gives White an overwhelming lead in development. Tal's recommendation 10...e3! is correct (Furman-Polugayevsky, 31st USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963).

11 ♘xf3 ♕a5 12 ♗d3 ♘c6 13 0-0 ♕xc5+ 14 ♔h1 ♗d7 (14...♕xc3 15 ♕b1! with the murderous threat of ♗b2)



15 ♘g5!

Switching the knight to e4 with gain of tempo and at the same time preventing queenside castling (in view of ♘f7). If 15 ♗g5, then 15...♘de7 and ...0-0-0.

15...♘e5 16 ♘e4 ♕c7 17 ♗g5 ♖f8

It is hard to offer Black any good advice: 17...♘e7 18 ♖ae1 will not do, nor will 17...♘xd3 18 ♕xd3 (threatening c3-c4) 18...b5 19 ♕f3 ♗c6 20 ♖ae1 and wins.

18 c4! ♘e7 19 c5! (at the cost of only a single pawn White has gained a decisive at-

tack) **19...♗c6**

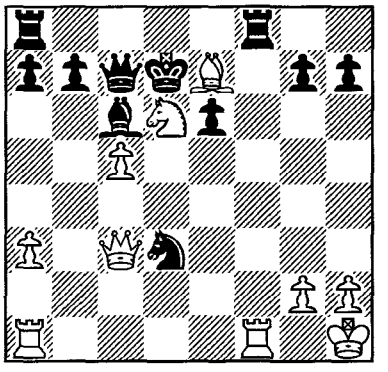
A rare occurrence in Korchnoi's games: by the 19th move he is already in a hopeless position. A spectacular rout would have followed after 19...♘c8 20 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 21 ♖f1+ ♘f7 (21...♔g8 22 ♘f6+!) 22 ♕f2 ♗e8 23 ♘f6!!

20 ♘d6+ ♔d7 21 ♕c3?!

After a series of strong, energetic moves, Shamkovich begins to weaken. 21 ♗xe7! ♔xe7 22 ♕c3 was immediately decisive. Had Korchnoi lost this game, it is doubtful whether in the end he would have been victorious in that USSR Championship...

21...♘xd3 22 ♗xe7

22 ♕xg7 ♖xf1+ 23 ♖xf1 ♗d5 24 ♗xe7 ♔c6 25 ♖b1! would also have retained a powerful attack. White judged that 22 ♗xe7 was also good, but here miracles begin to occur.



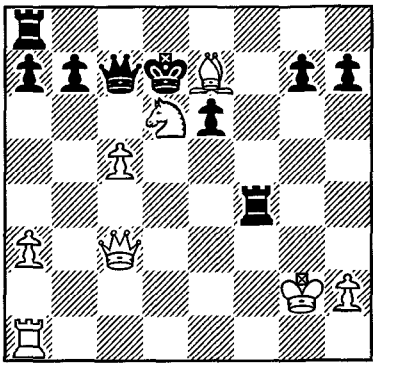
Shamkovich must have indulged in a pleasant calculation of variations such as 22...♖f2 23 ♖xf2 ♘xf2+ 24 ♔g1 ♗d5 (24...♖g8 25 ♖f1) 25 ♗g5! (25 ♕xg7 ♘h3+! 26 gxh3 ♕xc5+ 27 ♔f1 ♖g8! 28 ♕xg8 ♔xe7 or 26 ♔f1 ♖g8! 27 ♕xg8 ♗c4+ 28 ♘xc4 ♕f4+ 29 ♔e1 ♕f2+ 30 ♔d1 ♕d4+ leads only to a draw) 25...♘g4 26 ♕xg7+ ♔c6 27 ♕d4 ♕a5 28 ♗d2 ♕xc5 29 ♖c1, or 25...♘e4 26 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 27 ♕xg7+ ♔c6 28 ♕d4 ♗c2 29 ♖c1 e5 30 ♕c4, and the curtain comes down.

So, in order to at least prolong the resistance, something extraordinary is demanded of Black...

22...♗xg2+!

A surprise! Black's position remains lost, but Korchnoi does not miss an opportunity to land an unpleasant blow, forcing his opponent to again solve some not altogether clear problems, at a moment when mentally he had already chalked up the point in the tournament table.

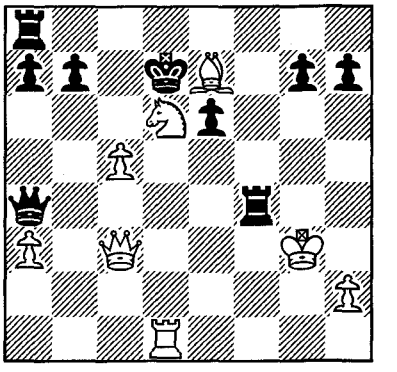
23 ♔xg2 ♘f4+ 24 ♖xf4 (forced) **24...♖xf4**



25 ♖d1

The most natural, human reply: mobilisation with the threat of a discovered check (in particular, ♘b5+). But perhaps it would have been simpler to play 25 ♕d2!? ♖g4+ (25...♕c6+ 26 ♘e4+!) 26 ♔h3 ♕xc5 27 ♘xb7+ ♕d4 28 ♖d1 ♔xe7 29 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 30 ♖xd4 with a won endgame, or the more aggressive 27 ♔xg4 ♔xe7 28 ♖f1! with a won middlegame.

25...♕c6+ 26 ♔g3 ♕a4!



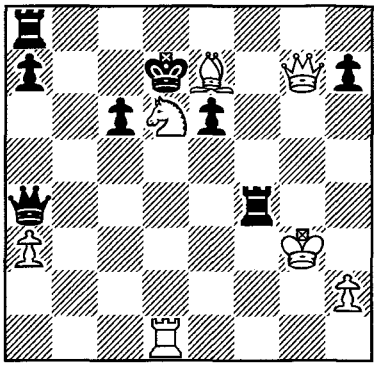
The only possibility of continuing the struggle and of again creating some threats: both ...♖g4+ and ...♕xd1, and in some cases ...♔xe7. It is now White who has to make great efforts, to find what is probably the only clear-cut winning continuation. But in such a situation it is very difficult to avoid losing your head and to switch to the calculation of sharp variations, in which, to develop a winning attack, you have to make a temporary sacrifice of material.

27 c6+?

An impulsive time-trouble move – a pawn sacrifice, dictated by the desire to deprive the enemy king of the c6-square, after which the invasion of the queen at g7 looks fatal for Black (the immediate 27 ♕xg7 encounters the same drawing mechanism: 27...♖f3+! 28 ♔xf3 ♕xd1+). But this is an optical illusion! In addition, the knight at d6 is deprived of its support...

Meanwhile, 27 ♖b1! (Tal) would have been decisive: 27...♖g4+ 28 ♔h3 ♔xe7 29 ♕f3! – it was necessary to see this terribly strong move, creating irresistible threats. Black has nothing better than 29...♖h4+ 30 ♔g3 ♖g4+ 31 ♕xg4 ♕xa3+ (it is slightly more tenacious to transpose into a lost endgame – 31...♕xg4+ 32 ♔xg4 b6 33 ♘e4 etc.) 32 ♔h4 ♕xc5 33 ♕xg7+ ♔xd6 34 ♖d1+, and to avoid mate he has to give up his queen.

27...bxc6 28 ♕xg7



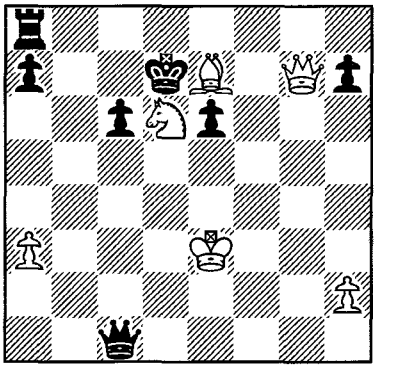
The attempt to correct the faulty idea by 28 ♕b2?! did not work in view of 28...e5! 29 ♕b7+? ♔e6 30 ♕xa8 ♕xa3+ with mate, or 29 ♖d2(d3) ♔e6! with an obvious advantage to Black.

28...♖f3+!

Shamkovich overlooked this clever counter-stroke. Now he suddenly finds himself in the position of having to save the game.

29 ♔xf3 ♕xd1+ 30 ♔e3 ♕c1+!?

A probing check: where will the king go to? Black is already playing with the draw in hand: 30...♕b3+ 31 ♔d2 ♕a2+ 32 ♔c1! ♕xa3+ 33 ♔c2 ♕a4+ 34 ♔c1. Some winning chances were promised by 31...c5!, but here White is rescued by a surprising 'aerial' construction – 32 ♘b7! (32 ♗g5+ ♔c6!) 32...♕d5+ (32...♕xb7 33 ♗xc5+ ♔c6 34 ♕g2+) 33 ♔e1 ♔c6 (33...♕e4+ 34 ♔f1! ♕f3+ 35 ♔e1, or 34...♕h1+ 35 ♔f2 ♕xh2+ 36 ♔e3 with a draw) 34 ♗xc5!, and Black is unable to break up this construction: 34...♖b8 35 ♘a5+ ♔b5 36 ♗b4, or 34...♕h1+ 35 ♔d2 ♕xh2+ 36 ♔c3 ♖c8! (an ambush) 37 a4! ♕h3+ 38 ♔d2, maintaining the balance.



31 ♔d3?

A final oversight. 31 ♔f3 was essential, when Black has nothing better than 31...♕d1+ 32 ♔e3 ♕b3+ 33 ♔d2 c5! (cf. the note to Black's 30th move). Now it all ends prosaically.

31...♕b1+ 32 ♔e3 ♕g6! (now White suffers decisive loss of material) **33 ♕b2 ♔xe7 34 ♕b7+ ♔xd6 35 ♕xa8 ♕g1+**, and in this queen endgame with two extra pawns Black won without difficulty.

After this, catching the wind of fortune in his sails, Korchnoi scored a further three successive wins – over Gufeld, Liberzon and Polugayevsky. However, his main rivals also sharply accelerated: Petrosian was level with him (both had 7½ out of 10), and Geller and Bronstein were a point behind.

'The tournament began at a rather sluggish tempo,' Bronstein wrote immediately afterwards. 'Not seeing any brilliant combinations, not finding grounds for excitement, the spectators were exclaiming: "It's boring without Tal!" But suddenly it all changed. A worthy replacement for Tal was found – Korchnoi, a player of exceptional talent and distinctive style. His fighting, uncompromising play undoubtedly had a positive influence on the entire tournament fight.'

In the words of Tal and Koblents, 'at the start of the second half of the tournament everyone wondered whether Korchnoi would be able to continue his winning run – after all, his opponent in the 10th round was the hitherto undefeated Polugayevsky.'

This game became a classic of the Grünfeld Defence, finding its way into all the opening books. It turned out to be unusually sharp, and in this complicated, non-standard struggle Korchnoi simply proved stronger and showed himself in his full glory: when specific, calculating play began, his famous counterattack went into operation. It was under the influence of this game that, half a century later, I took up the Grünfeld Defence, including the variation with 7...♘a6.

Game 5
L.Polugayevsky-V.Korchnoi
27th USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1960, 10th round
Grünfeld Defence D97

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♕b3 dxc4 6 ♕xc4 0-0 7 e4 ♘a6

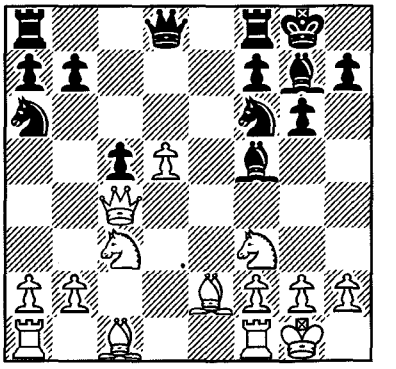
'In the mid-20th century this move was rarely employed. Therefore, in playing it I was counting on the slight novelty effect.' (Korchnoi). And indeed, at that time they mainly played the Smyslov Variation – 7...♗g4 8 ♗e3 ♘fd7 (cf. *Volume 2*).

8 ♗e2

Or 8 ♗f4 c5, as in my games with Topalov (Sarajevo 1999) and Piket (Wijk aan Zee 2000).

8...c5 9 d5 e6 10 0-0 exd5 11 exd5 ♗f5

The standard reply, leading to a *tabiya* from the second half of the 1980s and the 1990s. Nowadays the unusual move 11...♘b4 is also popular, with the idea of 12 ♖d1 b6, exploiting the position of the knight at b4.



12 a3

Preventing the invasion of the black knight at b4. But this is a slow plan (theory was then making only its first, timid steps), and it is better for White simply to complete his development. In his world championship matches against me Karpov played 12 ♗f4 or 12 ♖d1 (as did later Piket and Anand), while Timman and Khalifman went 12 ♗e3. For details – see Volume 7.

Incidentally, Korchnoi evaluates the diagram position in favour of White, reckoning that 'thanks to his strong central pawn he should have an advantage, although Polugayevsky was not able to demonstrate this, nor were Kasparov's many opponents.' Nevertheless, I came to realise that Black does indeed face difficult problems. Thus in my game with Piket (Amsterdam 1995) I was unable to restrain the advance of the passed d-

pawn. And I realised that in our era it is really too dangerous to play such complicated, strategically risky set-ups after a lengthy interval, relying only on residual impressions from many years earlier.

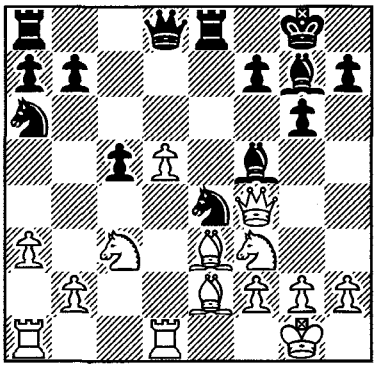
12...♖e8 13 ♖d1 (13 ♗f4 ♘e4 14 ♘b5!? is sharper – Bronstein) **13...♘e4** (13...♕b6 is also good) **14 ♗e3 ♘d6!?**

Black again had many possibilities, but he played in the most creative way.

15 ♕f4 (15 ♕b3 ♘c7 with equality) **15...♘e4?!**

Back again! 'White did not foresee this move, of course. It looks illogical, but it creates a mass of threats! In particular, 16...♘xc3 17 bxc3 ♖e4.' (Korchnoi)

It is curious how the assessment of the knight leap has changed: Tal generously awarded it two exclamation marks, Korchnoi and other commentators gave it one, but in Korchnoi's recent book *My Best Games* (Olms, 2001) there is altogether no mark. I go further: the move, although unexpected, is objectively dubious...



16 ♘b5?!

16 ♗xa6 bxa6 17 ♘a4 ♕a5 18 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 19 b4 ♕d8! etc. is advantageous to Black.

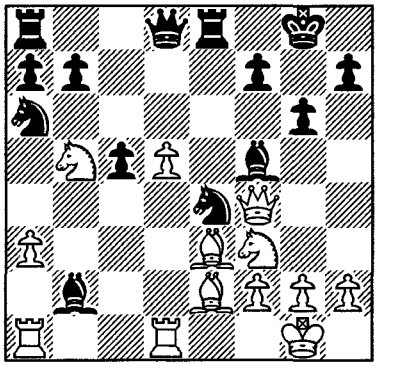
After a long think Polugayevsky sacrifices his b2-pawn, in order to create his own play, based on the strength of his d-pawn. Karpov acted in similar fashion against me in the 19th game of our 1986 match.

But in the given instance 16 ♗d3! was better, to exploit not only the strength of the d-pawn, but also the poorly defended black king. If 16...♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♘xc3, then 18 ♕h6! ♘xd1 (Korchnoi's idea of 18...♕f6 is dubious on account of the reply 19 ♗xf5 ♕xf5 20 ♘g5!, or 19...♘xd1 20 ♖xd1 ♕xf5 21 ♘g5 ♖ad8 22 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 23 ♖e1! and wins), for example:

1) 19 ♖xd1 f6 (19...♗xd3?! 20 ♘g5!) 20 ♗xf5 gxf5 21 ♘h4 ♖e5, 'and it should be possible to parry White's attack' (Korchnoi), but after 21 d6! this is not easy to do. Black should probably return the exchange – 19...♖xe3!? 20 fxe3 ♕f8, when he does indeed parry the attack: 21 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 22 ♗xf5 gxf5 23 ♘h4 b5 24 ♘xf5 b4 25 axb4 cxb4 etc.;

2) 19 ♘g5! ♕xg5 (this is what Korchnoi was intending to play; if 19...♕f6.20 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 21 ♖xd1 ♗xd3 White has 22 ♘e6+! ♖xe6 23 dxe6 g5 24 ♕xd3, winning) 20 ♗xg5! ♖e1+ 21 ♗f1 ♗d3 22 h3!! (no one noticed this quiet move; 22 ♖xd1 ♖xd1 23 g4 ♗xf1 24 h4 ♘c7 25 ♗f6 ♘e8 26 ♗e7 ♘g7 27 ♗f6 ♘e8 is equal) 22...♖xf1+ 23 ♔h2 ♘c7 24 ♗f6 ♘e8 25 ♗e7 with winning chances: 25...♘c7 26 ♗xc5 ♘xd5 27 ♗d4 f6 28 ♕d2!, or 25...♘g7 26 ♕d2!, and the mobile white queen is stronger than the uncoordinated army of black pieces.

16...♗xb2



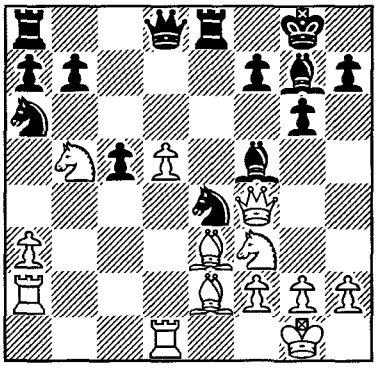
Of course! 'Korchnoi remains Korchnoi.' (Tal). He is faithful to his creative credo: al-

ways to accept sacrifices, if immediate benefits for the opponent are not apparent.

17 ♖a2

A tempting continuation, but it would appear that more was promised by 17 ♖ab1 ♗g7 18 g4 (18 d6!?) 18...♗d7 19 ♗d3 (fighting against the knight at e4) 19...♗xb5 20 ♗xe4 (recommended by Geller) 20...♘c7 21 ♘g5!? ♗f6 22 h4, or 20...♕d7 21 d6 ♖xe4 (this exchange sacrifice is practically forced: 21...♖e6 22 ♗d5!) 22 ♕xe4 ♗c6 23 ♕f4 ♖e8 24 h3 with a very complicated game, but the passed d-pawn allows White to face the future with confidence. 19...♕f6! (Korchnoi) is safer, although after 20 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 21 g5 the knight at b5 and the d-pawn cramp Black's position, for the moment his extra pawn is not felt, and the position is one of dynamic balance.

17...♗g7



18 ♗c4

Building up pressure and threatening a possible d5-d6. 'White rejected 18 d6 because of 18...♗e6 19 ♕xe4 ♗xa2 20 ♕xb7 ♕b6! 21 ♕xb6 axb6, when he has insufficient compensation for the lost material. But the bishop at c4 cuts off the queen's escape. An alternative was the unhurried but safe 18 h3!?' (Korchnoi). In this case Black could have begun tackling the knight at b5 – 18...♕a5! (threatening ...♘b4) 19 ♘d2 c4! 20 ♗xc4 ♕a4, or 19 ♗c4 ♕a4 20 ♖c1 ♗d7! with a comfortable game.

18...♘f6!

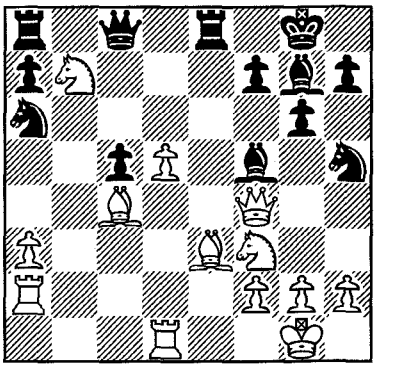
Intending both ...♖e4, and ...♘h5. What an amazingly agile knight! And what remarkable resourcefulness in a highly complicated position! It is not surprising that Polugayevsky's eyes were dazzled: there were just too many tempting continuations...

19 ♘d6?!

Korchnoi condemns this move, suggesting instead 19 ♕d6 or 19 ♕g3 'with roughly equal chances.' However, if 19 ♕d6, then 19...♕a5! and ...♖ad8 is strong, and if 19 ♕g3 – 19...♖e4 20 ♗e2 (20 ♗d3? ♖g4) 20...♘h5 21 ♕d6 ♗d7!, in both cases with the initiative for Black.

On the other hand, 19 ♘g5!? would at least have justified the move ♗c4 and maintained a complicated position: 19...♘g4?! 20 d6 or 19...♘h5?! 20 ♕f3 h6 21 ♘xf7 ♕d7 22 d6 is dangerous for Black, and so he has to cast caution to the winds – 19...h6 20 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 21 ♘d6+ ♔f8 (if 21...♔g8 there is also 22 ♘xf5) 22 ♘xe8 ♕xe8. Black has two pieces for a rook, but White's powerful passed pawn, to all appearances, gives him equal chances.

19...♘h5 20 ♘xb7 ♕c8



21 ♕d6?

Seemingly natural, but in fact the losing move. 21 ♘d6 was essential, and although after 21...♕b8 'White would have lost material without sufficient compensation' (Korchnoi), he had an interesting queen sacrifice – 22 ♕xf5! gxf5 23 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 24 ♗xa6 ♕a4 25 ♗e2 with saving chances. True, by playing

25...c4!? or 25...♘f6! Black would nevertheless retain an obvious advantage.

21...♘b8!

A brilliant reply, quite overlooked by Polugayevsky. Now both ...♕xb7 and ...♗f8 are threatened, and it becomes clear that White is bound to lose material. His attack proves to be a mirage, whereas Black's pieces suddenly, and as if by magic, occupy the necessary squares.

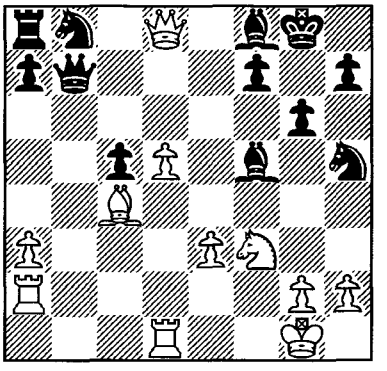
22 ♗b5 (22 h3 ♕xb7 23 g4 ♗b1 or 23...♗e4 and wins) **22...♖xe3!**

'Avoiding a clever trap: 22...♗f8? 23 ♗xe8 ♗xd6 24 ♘xd6, and the picture changes sharply.' (Tal)

23 fxe3 ♗f8 (the immediate 23...♕xb7 24 ♗c6 ♕b6 or 24 ♕xc5 ♘f6 is also possible) **24 ♕d8**

It would not have helped to play 24 ♕e5 ♕xb7 25 ♖b2?! ♘d7 26 ♗c6 ♕c8 (26...♕xc6!?) 27 ♕c3 ♗g7 28 ♕d2 ♗xb2 29 ♗xa8 ♕xa8 30 ♕xb2 ♘hf6 (Korchnoi), or 25 e4 ♕xb5 26 exf5 ♘d7 and Black wins.

24...♕xb7 25 ♗c4



'25 ♖b2 was somewhat more tenacious' (Korchnoi), although after 25...♘d7 White would have lost with both 26 ♗c6 ♕xb2 27 ♕xa8 ♕xa3 and 26 ♗xd7 ♕xb2 27 ♕xa8 ♗xd7.

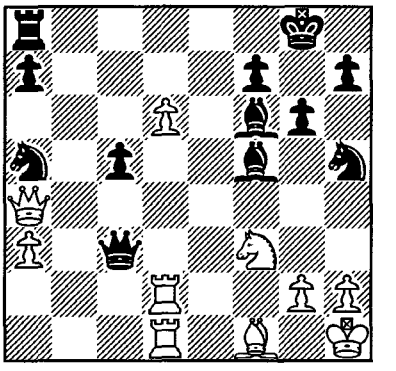
25...♘c6! (more flamboyant than 25...♘d7) **26 ♕h4** (26 dxc6 ♖xd8 27 cxb7 ♖xd1+ 28 ♔f2 ♖b1 29 ♗d5 ♗e6 and wins) **26...♘a5 27 ♗f1 ♕b3 28 ♖ad2 ♕xe3+ 29 ♔h1 ♗e7?**

'Already from the 25th move the two players were involved in a fierce time scramble. Here Black should have prevented the advance of the d-pawn by 29...♘b7!' (Korchnoi)

30 ♕a4 ♕c3?!

According to Korchnoi, this is 'the only defence against the threats of ♖e2 and ♕xa5.' But perhaps 30...♗d8!? would have been better.

31 d6? (31 ♗d3! was more tenacious) **31...♗f6**



32 d7

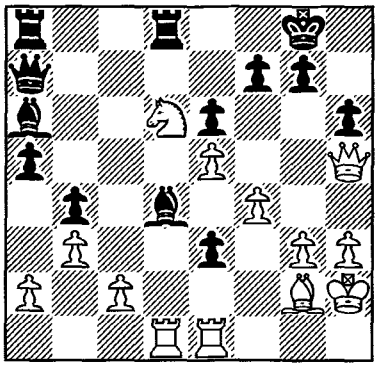
'In the variation 32 ♖d3 ♗xd3 33 ♖xd3 ♕c1 34 ♖d1 Black would have won by 34...♕h6! It was also useful (in time-trouble!) to see the following variation: 32 g4 ♕xf3+ 33 ♗g2 ♕xg4 34 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 35 ♗xa8 ♗xd1 36 ♖xd1 ♘b3!' (Korchnoi)

32...♖d8 33 ♖e2 ♔g7 34 ♔g1 ♕b3 35 ♕xb3 ♘xb3 36 h3?! (36 ♘e5 ♘d4) **36...♘g3** ('again this knight has something to say,' comments Tal with a smile) **37 ♖e3 ♘xf1 38 ♖xb3 ♗c2 0-1**

A classic example of counterattack!

Then Viktor played draws with Bronstein, Petrosian and Averbakh, and defeated Gurgenidze and Spassky. With 11 out of 15, he was leading together with Petrosian, half a point ahead of Geller. But at this moment, four rounds before the finish of this exhausting marathon, a terrible grimace of fortune awaited Korchnoi.

Game 6
V.Bagirov-V.Korchnoi
27th USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1960, 16th round



26...♗c3 27 ♗xa8?! (27 ♖xe3! ♕xe3 28 ♘xf7! ♖xd1 29 ♘xh6+ would have forced a draw), and here Korchnoi, who was intending to play 27...♗xe1 28 ♖xe1 (28 ♗b7? ♖xd6 29 exd6 e2! and wins) 28...♖xa8 29 ♕f3 e2, by mistake picked up... the bishop at a6!

'All this happened literally in seconds,' writes Viktor Vasiliev. 'He removed the bishop from the board and, going pale, he froze with his hand raised. Meeting Bagirov's glance, he whispered barely audibly "I resign". Quickly, making an effort to stop his hand shaking, he signed the score-sheets, stood up and, not looking to either side, not seeing and not hearing anything, he left. If he had heard how the auditorium of the Leningrad Palace of Physical Culture began to groan, when the sense of what had happened reached the spectators... He walked home, tormenting himself with one question: how could this have happened? So feebly, so ridiculously to lose half a point, or more probably a whole point – after all, Bagirov's position was clearly worse, and in addition he was running into time-trouble. How stupid, to pick up the wrong bishop and immediately lose everything – a rook, the game, and with it hopes of the long-awaited title of USSR Champion...'

Yes, this was a very severe blow, and after it few would have been unable to come to their senses. The position in the leading group changed: now Geller had broken half a point clear. In the next round, taking great risks and passing close to defeat, Korchnoi managed to defeat Krogius.

'The ridiculous blunder against Bagirov in no way troubled Korchnoi,' wrote Tal and Koblents. 'He possesses one of the most distinctive styles, which is not at all easy to divine. Incidentally, one of the authors of this article (it is not hard to guess which!) has not managed to find any at all appropriate key to the enigma of the Leningrad player. Possibly the game with Krogius will enable a step to be made in this direction. The opening was played very quietly... Suddenly Korchnoi sharply changed track, and the opponent's isolated pawn became very strong. It is probable that this plan was in principle incorrect, but it contained many pitfalls, one of which Krogius did not manage to avoid.'

However, that day his rivals also won, maintaining the status quo: Geller – 12½ out of 17, Korchnoi and Petrosian – 12.

Then came the penultimate round, the decisive encounter with Geller. 'Yes, it is very interesting if the leaders meet at the finish, and especially if they have such an attractive style of play. This game, like a magnet, drew the attention of the entire auditorium.' (Tal, Koblents)

It was clear that only a win (with Black!) would give Korchnoi real chances of the gold. A win over an opponent who had a reputation for being very much a 'white' player, and who, in addition, was in excellent form: before this game Geller had scored 9 out of 10! On this occasion he would have been satisfied with a draw, and it is hard to imagine how one could consciously play for a win with Black against a top-class grandmaster, well-known for his deep opening preparation. Nevertheless, Korchnoi was able to set his opponent difficult problems – both purely chess, and psychological, which in the end proved insoluble even for Geller.

Game 7
E.Geller-V.Korchnoi
27th USSR Championship,
Leningrad 1960, 18th round
Alekhine Defence B03

1 e4 ♘f6

The first surprise: White is invited to seize space and fight for an advantage, but... in very complicated and sharp play! 'The choice of opening more or less corresponded with my reckless mood; although the Alekhine Defence is not totally correct, it is a fighting opening. It is no accident that it is occasionally employed by Fischer, Larsen and Hort.' (Korchnoi)

In addition, this defence had never previously occurred in any of Geller's serious games. But, knowing his innate maximalism, it could be assumed that he would try to 'punish' his opponent for his audacity, he would be drawn into the maelstrom of battle, and for a while would forget about his competitive objectives – about the fact that he needed a draw. Which is exactly what happened!

2 e5 ♘d5 3 d4 d6 4 c4

Later, until the end of his career, Geller almost exclusively played 4 ♘f3 (in particular, against Korchnoi, Stockholm Interzonal 1962).

4...♘b6 5 f4 (the most aggressive, but also the most double-edged variation) **5...♗f5** (5...dxe5 6 fxe5 c5?! – *Volume 2, Game No.60*)

6 ♘c3 dxe5 7 fxe5 e6 8 ♘f3 ♗e7

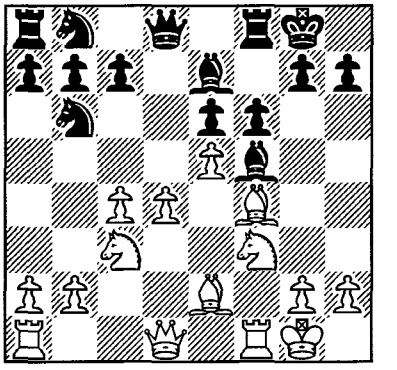
They usually play 8...♘c6! 9 ♗e3 ♗g4, 9...♕d7 or, most often, 9...♗e7 10 d5!? with great complications, which then were judged to favour White, but are now considered acceptable for Black.

9 ♗e2 (as it later transpired, 9 ♗d3! is stronger) **9...0-0 10 0-0 f6**

By undermining the opponent's centre, Black solves his opening problems, although White retains a certain advantage in space.

11 ♗f4?!

The absence of the knight from c6 induced Geller to seek new ways, but in this set-up the bishop should defend the d4-pawn. 11 c5 ♘d5 12 ♘h4 is pointless in view of 12...♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♗e4. After 11 ♗e3, apart from 11...♘c6 Black can also play 11...fxe5 12 ♘xe5 ♘8d7. The line that perhaps corresponded best with White's tournament objective was 11 exf6 ♗xf6 12 ♗e3 ♘c6 (Black has transposed into the variation 8...♘c6 9 ♗e3 ♗e7, having avoided 10 d5!?) 13 ♕d2 ♕e8 (13...♕e7!?) 14 ♖ad1 ♖d8 15 ♕c1 with a minimal plus for White (Suetin-Korchnoi, 20th USSR Championship, Moscow 1952; Feldman-Korchnoi, Leningrad 1953).



Korchnoi's conclusion was unambiguous: 'So, I had some experience with it, in contrast to Geller, who knew of this position only by hearsay. My choice of opening had been correct! Now it was just a matter of playing well.'

11...♘c6 (immediately putting pressure on the d-pawn) **12 exf6 ♗xf6 13 d5**

Perhaps Geller had wanted to play 13 ♘b5, but here he noticed that this was a blank shot in view of 13...♖f7 (or 13...♖c8 with the same idea of ...a7-a6) 14 d5 exd5 15 c5, and now not 15...♗xb2 16 cxb6! ♗xa1 17 bxc7 ♕e7 18 ♘g5, which 'looks very dangerous for Black' (Korchnoi), but 15...♘c4! 16 ♘xc7 ♘xb2 (16...♘e3!?) 17 ♕d2 (if 17 ♕b3(xd5), then 17...♖c8) 17...d4! with very sharp play.

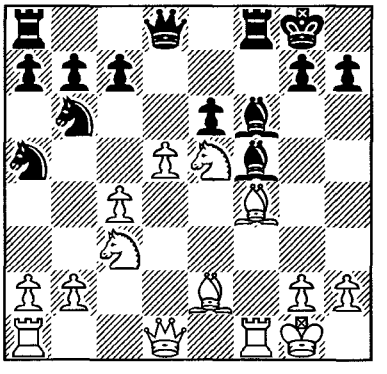
13...♘a5

Strangely enough, White is already faced with quite unpleasant problems: his c4-pawn is hanging and the black bishops are trained on his queenside. Some important decision has to be taken...

14 ♘e5!?

'There is no doubt that initially Geller was intending to play differently – 14 d6 cxd6 15 ♗xd6 for example, but he did not like 15...♖f7 16 c5 ♘bc4, when Black's threats – ...♘xb2, ...♘e3 and ...♘xd6 – seem difficult to parry. But now the white knight ends up in a suspended state!' (Korchnoi)

But the move in the game is apparently the best. It is unfavourable for White to play 14 ♘d4?! ♘axc4 15 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 16 dxe6 ♕xd1! 17 ♖axd1 (17 ♘xd1 ♖ae8) 17...♘xb2 18 ♖c1 ♖ae8, or the sharper 14 ♘b5 ♘axc4! (Korchnoi's move 14...♗xb2 is unclear in view of 15 ♗xc7) 15 ♗xc4 (15 dxe6 ♕xd1 and ...♘xb2) 15...♘xc4 16 ♘xc7 ♖c8 17 ♘xe6 ♗xe6 18 dxe6 ♕b6+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xe6 etc. And aiming for a draw by 14 dxe6 ♗xe6 (14...♘axc4 15 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 16 ♕d5!) 15 c5 ♗xc3 16 ♕xd8 ♖axd8 17 ♗xc7! ♗xb2 18 ♖ab1 is not at all what Geller was dreaming of, when he began the game and played 11 ♗f4?!



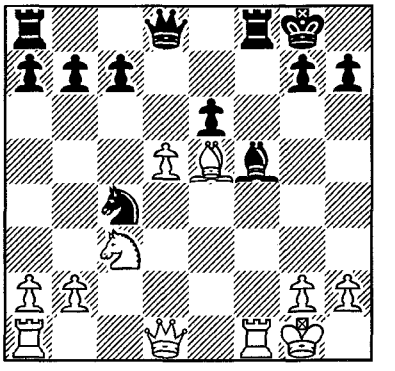
14...♗xe5

'A mistake, typical of the early period of my chess career: in striving to win material as soon as possible, I underestimated the opponent's tactical possibilities,' writes Korchnoi, recommending 14...♕e7!? 15 g4! (15 ♕d4 ♖ad8! with the threat of ...♘c6) 15...♗xe5 16 ♗xe5 exd5 (after 16...♘axc4 17 gxf5 ♘xe5 18 fxe6 or 18 dxe6 ♕g5+ 19 ♔h1 ♖xf5 20 ♕b3 ♖e8 21 ♘b5 the 'wedge' at e6 equalises the chances) 17 ♗d4 ♗e6 etc., 'and Black's position is more pleasant.' 17...c5! is even better.

However, White too can play more strongly – 17 ♗g3! ♗e6 18 cxd5 with counterplay for the pawn, sufficient for a draw: 18...♖xf1+ 19 ♗xf1 ♘xd5 20 ♘xd5 ♕c5+ 21 ♗f2 ♕xd5 22 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♖d1 c6 24 b4 ♘c4 25 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 26 ♖d7 and ♗d4, or 18...♘xd5 19 ♘xd5 ♕c5+ 20 ♖f2 ♖xf2 21 ♖c1 ♕xd5 22 ♕xd5 ♗xd5 23 ♔xf2 ♘c6 24 ♗xc7 and ♖d1, aiming for the exchange of rooks and of the light-squared bishop for the knight on c6.

From the practical point of view, 14...♕e7 may have been slightly more forceful, since it would not have been easy for White to find a way of disentangling his clump of pieces and deciding on the weakening 15 g4! However, this does not signify that 14...♗xe5 is a mistake. An impartial analysis shows that these two continuations are roughly equivalent.

15 ♗xe5 ♘axc4 16 ♗xc4 ♘xc4



17 ♗xg7!

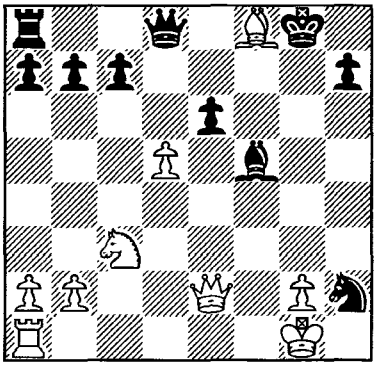
'I overlooked this move!', Korchnoi admitted. 'King safety is one of the most important factors in the middlegame. Now it is White who has the initiative, and Black has to fight for equality.' In my opinion, this is an exaggeration: Korchnoi finds a very interesting possibility of counterplay.

17...♘e3! (after 17...♔xg7 18 ♕d4+ and ♕xc4 White does indeed have the initiative) **18 ♕e2!?**

Geller's maximalism shows itself. For achieving a draw it was safer to play 18 ♕d4 ♕g5 19 ♖f2 ♘c2! 20 ♖xc2 ♕xg7 with equality (Korchnoi).

18...♘xf1 19 ♗xf8 ♘xh2!

Now things are also anxious for the white king. A highly unusual position is reached, in which both kings are exposed, but Black is the first to begin giving checks, and this gives him chances of confusing his opponent.



20 ♗c5

After 20 ♔xh2? ♕h4+ 21 ♔g1 ♕d4+! (21...♖xf8 22 ♕e5! is not so clear) 22 ♔h2 ♖xf8 23 ♖d1 (23 dxe6 ♖f6 and wins – Korchnoi) 23...♕f4+ 24 g3 ♕g4 the extra pawn should give Black a win.

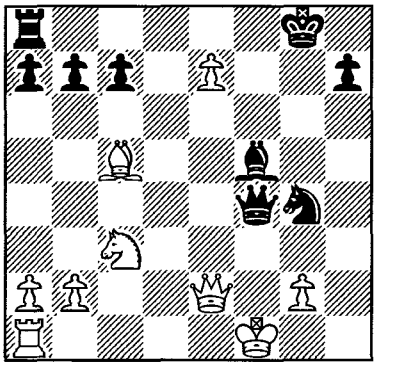
And in the event of 20 dxe6 ♘g4 21 e7 White would have had to balance on the edge of the abyss: 21...♕d6 22 ♕f3 ♗e6 23 ♘e4 ♕h2+ 24 ♔f1 ♕e5! 25 ♔g1!, or 21...♕d4+ 22 ♔h1 ♕f4 23 g3 ♕xg3 24 ♖f1! (after Korchnoi's move 24 ♕c4+? there is the decisive 24...♗e6! 25 ♕xe6+ ♔h8) 24...♗d7 25 ♕c4+ ♔h8 26 ♗g7+! ♔xg7 27 ♕f7+ ♔h6 28 ♕f8+ with perpetual check.

'News of the draw in the Bagirov-Petrosian game appeared to spur on the leaders: they began playing with great intensity. And the outcome was probably the most interesting game of the championship.' (Tal, Koblents)

20...♘g4!

The most unpleasant reply for White. Black creates the threat of ...♕h4-h2+, which, however, is not deadly: his king is also open, and the white pawn forces its way through to e7. 'But in the end I played the game of my life!' (Korchnoi)

21 dxe6 ♕h4 22 e7 ♕h2+ (but not 22...♖e8? 23 ♕c4+ ♔g7 24 ♕f4! Korchnoi) **23 ♔f1 ♕f4+**



24 ♔g1

Geller instinctively moves his king away from the centre, although 24 ♔e1!? with the threat of ♘d5 was quite safe and would have quickly led to the draw that White so desired:

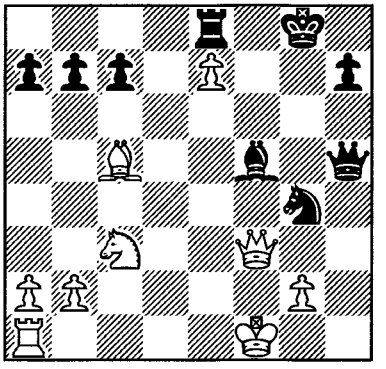
1) 24...♕g3+ 25 ♔d1 ♔f7 (Korchnoi; 25...♘e5!? 26 ♘d5 c6 is equal) 26 ♕c4+ ♔g6 27 ♖c1 ♘e5 28 ♘e2 ♕d3+ 29 ♕xd3 ♘xd3 with a draw, or simply 25 ♔d2, forcing perpetual check – 25...♕f4+ 26 ♔e1 (26 ♔d1 ♘f6!, and White loses after 27 ♘d5? ♕a4+ 28 b3 ♕d7 Korchnoi) 26...♕g3+;

2) 24...♖e8 25 ♘d5! ♕h2! (but not 25...♕g3+? 26 ♔d2 b6 27 ♖f1! and wins – Korchnoi) 26 ♘xc7 ♖xe7 with inevitable perpetual check, or 26 ♔d2!? ♕h6+ 27 ♔c3 ♘f6 28 ♘xc7 ♘e4+ 29 ♔b4 ♘xc5 30 ♕c4+ ♗e6 31 ♕xc5 with a guaranteed draw.

24...♖e8 (of course, avoiding the repetition of moves) **25 ♕f3**

Now 25 ♘d5? was bad on account of 25...♕h2+ 26 ♔f1 c6! (Korchnoi).

25...♕h2+ 26 ♔f1 ♕h5!



27 ♕d5+?

Played in the excitement of the struggle. After the cool-headed 27 ♔g1! Black could hardly have been satisfied by 27...c6 28 ♕f4! or 27...b6 28 ♕d5+ ♔g7 29 ♗d4+ ♔g6 30 ♕c6+ ♔f7 31 ♕xc7 ♖xe7 32 ♕f4, and so he would have had to 'beg' for a draw by repetition – 27...♕h2+ 28 ♔f1 ♕h5! (28...♕h1+? 29 ♔e2 ♕xa1 30 ♕xf5 ♕xb2+ 31 ♔d3 etc. is bad for him).

Korchnoi makes a valuable comment: 'In his career, Geller played and won many decisive games. When he needed to win, and his opponent was satisfied with a draw, he would calmly break down his opponent's resistance. He rarely found himself in the opposite situation – of fighting for a draw. And in this game his nerves let him down. Incidentally, similar situations also occurred with me, and I did not always emerge with honour from a difficult situation.'

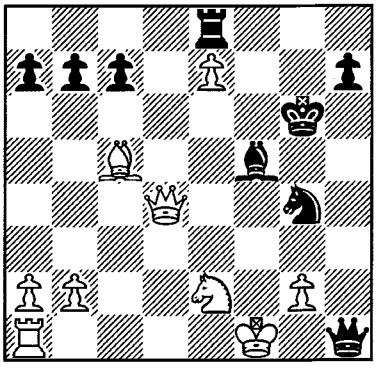
27...♔g7 28 ♕d4+?!

Just one error – and already it is not easy for White to coordinate his pieces. 'The developing move 28 ♖e1 was undoubtedly stronger, although after 28... ♗d3+ 29 ♕xd3 ♕xc5 30 ♕g3 h5 Black stands better, since 31 ♕h4? is not possible on account of 31...♕c4+, when White loses his queen.' (Korchnoi). And yet by 31 ♕f4! ♖xe7 32 ♖xe7+ ♕xe7 33 ♘d5 he would have gained a draw: 33...♕f7 (33...♕d6 34 ♕g5+) 34 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 35 ♘xc7 ♘e3+ 36 ♔f2 ♘d1+ 37 ♔g3 ♘xb2 38 ♘b5.

28...♔g6 (here the king is not threatened in any way) **29 ♘e2**

A difficult choice. 29 ♕d8? ♕h1+ 30 ♗g1 ♘e3+ was not possible, nor was 29 ♘d5? ♕h1+ 30 ♕g1 ♗d3+ 31 ♔e1 ♕xg1+ 32 ♗xg1 ♗c4 (Korchnoi), while if 29 ♖d1 Black could have replied 29...b6 30 ♕d8 ♕h1+ 31 ♗g1 ♔f7! 32 ♖e1 ♕h6! 33 ♕d5+ ♗e6, surrounding the e7-pawn.

29...♕h1+



30 ♘g1?

More stubborn resistance could have been offered by going into a bad endgame by 30 ♕g1 ♕xg1+ 31 ♔xg1 b6 32 ♗a3 ♘e3 (Korchnoi) or 32...c5 33 b4 ♘e3! and ...♘c2. Black would have picked up the e7-pawn, retaining the initiative. With the queens on he quickly creates decisive threats to the king.

30...b6 31 ♕d8 ♘f6 32 ♗a3 ♗e4 33 ♕d2 c5 34 b4 c4 35 b5 ♗d3+ 0-1

'This is a special game, one that is closest to my heart. Played towards the end of a very difficult tournament, it is full of fighting spirit from start to finish.' (Korchnoi)

In the final round both Korchnoi's rivals gained victories, but he too won 'to order' against Suetin – and nevertheless became national champion: 1. Korchnoi – 14 out of 19; 2-3. Geller and Petrosian – 13½; 4. Bagirov – 12; 5. Polugayevsky – 11½; 6. Averbakh – 11; 7-8. Smyslov and Taimanov – 10½; 9-10. Krogius and Spassky – 10; 11. Simagin – 9½; 12. Bronstein – 9, etc.

A brilliant finish! And staggering aggression: +12–3=4. 'My thorough self-analysis bore fruit,' Korchnoi wrote several years later. 'I think that in the competitive sense this was one of my greatest successes.' As we have seen, the tournament turned out well for him in not only the competitive sense, but also the creative. He triumphed by unswervingly following his distinctive manner of play. His opponents, even the most famous, were unable to withstand the tension he created. This is Korchnoi's trademark, which has distinguished his play for many decades.

Here are the interesting reactions of two contestants in that championship.

Bronstein: 'Essentially only three players – Korchnoi, Petrosian and Geller – were in contention for first place. Each of them had his motto: the first – "Risk and win!", the second – "Win without risk!", and the third – "Create!". Moreover, in his style each of this trio is a genuine champion. The play of the new USSR Champion is characterised by amazing tenacity in defence, resourcefulness in attack and virtuoso mastery in the endgame... It is to be hoped that this victory will not go to the head of the young grandmaster.'

Simagin: 'Korchnoi's play is highly distinctive. In contrast to some of his colleagues, he does not aim to rationalise his chess style. From the very start of a game Korchnoi normally imposes mind-boggling complications on his opponent. This striving for complications often leads him into rather dubious positions, where for many hours he has to parry numerous threats. He is an exceptionally strong-willed player. And in the field of tactical mastery, Korchnoi, in my view, is not inferior to Tal.'

Drama on Curaçao

In the middle of an international tournament organised by the Central Chess Club (Moscow, May-June 1960) Korchnoi won five successive games and yet still finished half a point behind the winners: 1-2. Kholmov and Smyslov 8½ out of 11; Korchnoi – 8, etc. But here he won another textbook game in the Grünfeld Defence, and against an old 'offender' Vladimir Simagin – a prominent expert on this opening.

Game 8
V.Simagin-V.Korchnoi
Moscow 1960, 8th round
Grünfeld Defence D91

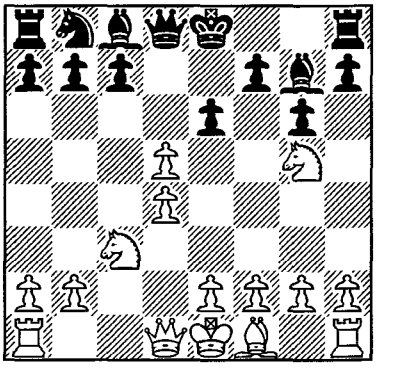
1 d4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 g6 3 c4 ♗g7 4 ♘c3 (4 g3 – *Game Nos.100 and 101*) **4...d5 5 ♗g5** (not the most aggressive variation, but a very reliable one; 5 ♗f4 – *Game No.1*; 5 ♕b3 – *Game No.5*) **5...♘e4 6 cxd5**

After 6 ♗h4 Korchnoi used to play 6...c6 or 6...c5, but later the main reply became 6...♘xc3 7 bxc3 dxc4 8 e3 b5 or 8 ♕a4+ ♕d7 9 ♕xc4 b6.

6...♘xg5

In the earlier game Simagin-Korchnoi (20th USSR Championship, Moscow 1952) after 6...♘xc3 7 bxc3 ♕xd5 8 e3 ♗g4 9 ♗e2 ♘c6 10 ♗h4 0-0 11 0-0 ♖fe8 12 ♗g3 White retained some advantage.

7 ♘xg5 e6



In the game Petrosian-Korchnoi (41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973) Black surprised his opponent with a pawn sacrifice – 7...c6!? and after the cautious 8 ♘f3 (8 dxc6 is more critical) 8...cxd5 9 e3 0-0 10 ♗e2 ♘c6 11 0-0 e6 he gained a perfectly sound position.

8 ♘f3

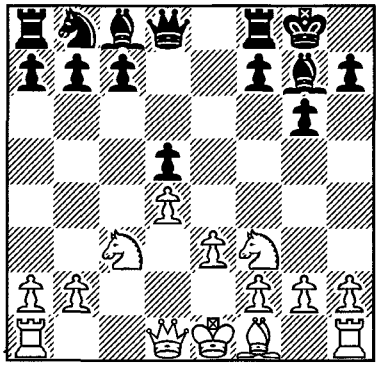
After the sharper attempt 8 ♕d2 exd5 9 ♕e3+ ♔f8 10 ♕f4 ♗f6 11 h4 h6 12 ♘f3 c6 13 e3 ♗e6 14 ♗d3 ♘d7 15 0-0-0, both 15...♔g7 16 g4 ♕b8! (Spassky-Stein, 31st USSR Championship, Leningrad 1963) and 15...♕b8! (Bisguier-Korchnoi, Lone Pine 1979) are possible, in each case with equality.

8...exd5 9 e3

A grandmaster nuance: the immediate 9 b4 allows 9...♕d6!, and if 10 ♕b3, then 10...♘c6! Therefore White is forced to waste a tempo on 10 a3, and after 10...0-0 11 e3 c6 12 ♗e2 ♗f5 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♘a4?! (14 ♕b3 is equal) 14...a5! 15 ♕b3?! b5 16 ♘c5 a4! 17 ♕c3 ♘b6 18 ♘d2 ♖ae8 19 ♖fe1 ♖e7 Black has an excellent game (Seirawan-Kasparov, Dubai Olympiad 1986).

9...0-0

Nowadays the most accurate is considered to be 9...a5! 10 ♗e2 0-0 11 0-0 c6 (I.Ivanov-Tseshkovsky, Erevan 1977). It is on such micro-nuances that modern opening theory is built.



10 ♗e2

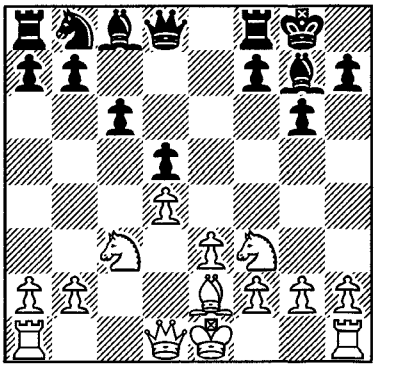
Later it transpired that the classical minority attack 10 b4! is more energetic. The following continuations are possible:

1) 10...♗e6 11 ♗e2 ♘d7 12 0-0 f5 13 ♖e1 g5 (the same plan as in the note to Black's 11th move, but... against a far more sophisticated opponent!) 14 ♖c1 ♔h8 15 ♗d3 c6 (15...a6!? Karpov) 16 b5 g4 17 ♘d2 c5 18 dxc5 ♘xc5 19 ♘b3 ♘xb3 20 axb3! ♖c8 21 ♘e2, and White was able to exploit the holes in the enemy position (Karpov-Korchnoi, London 1984);

2) 10...c6 11 ♗d3!? (11 ♗e2 ♗e6 12 0-0 ♘d7 13 ♖c1 occurred in the source game Antoshin-Gligoric, Zagreb 1965) 11...♘d7 12 0-0 ♘b6 13 a4 ♗e6 14 b5 c5 15 dxc5! ♗xc3 16 ♖c1 ♗b2 17 ♖b1 ♗f6 18 cxb6 (Seirawan-Korchnoi, Brussels 1986) 18...♕xb6, and Black's two bishops compensate for the weakness of his isolated d5-pawn;

3) 10...♕d6 11 ♕b3 ♗e6 12 ♗e2 c6 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♘e1 a5!? with a complicated game (Barbero-Korchnoi, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990).

10...c6



11 0-0

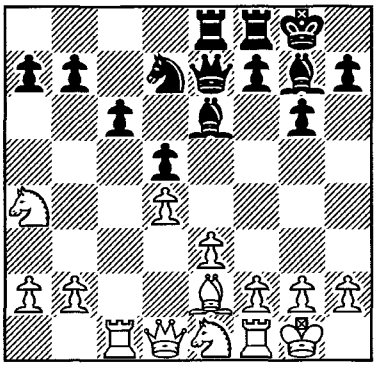
If 11 b4!? there could have followed 11...♗e6 or 11...a5!? 12 b5 a4 (12...c5!?) 13 0-0 ♕a5 (Ostermeyer-Korchnoi, Biel 1984). In any event, refraining from b2-b4 makes things easier for Black.

11...♗e6

A slight innovation, like 11...a5!? (Uhlmann-Simagin, Budapest 1961). Earlier 11...♕e7 was played, for example: 12 ♖c1 ♘d7 13 ♘e1 ♘b6 14 ♘d3 ♖e8 15 ♘c5 ♘c4 and ...b7-b6 with equality (Vaitonis-Keres, Tartu 1938), or 12 a3 ♘d7!? (12...♗e6 13 ♖c1 ♘d7 14 ♘e1 ♘b6 15 ♘d3 ♖ad8 16 ♘c5 ♗c8 17 b4 ♘c4 and ...b7-b6 with equality, Lasker-Botvinnik, Nottingham 1936) 13 b4 ♘b6 14

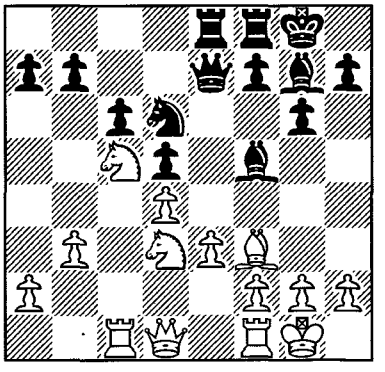
♕b3 ♗e6 15 ♖fe1 f5 16 ♗f1 g5 17 ♘e2 ♘c4 with approximate equality (Aronin-Korchnoi, 24th USSR Championship, Moscow 1957).

12 ♘a4 (12 b4!?) **12...♘d7 13 ♖c1 ♕e7 14 ♘e1 ♖ae8**



'Since White is not creating any concrete threats, Black comfortably deploys his pieces – in the centre, but with the idea of soon launching an attack on the kingside.' (Korchnoi)

15 ♘d3 ♗f5 (threatening ...♗xd4) **16 ♗f3 ♘b6! 17 ♘ac5 ♘c4 18 b3 ♘d6**



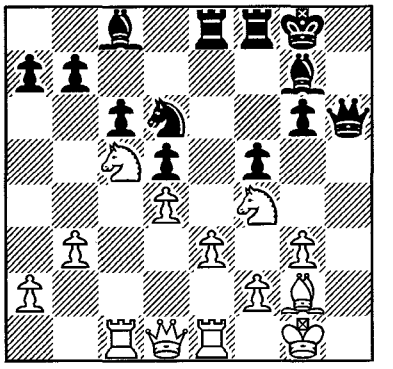
The ideal place for the knight in such positions with a 'Carlsbad' pawn structure. We have already seen this in two games analysed in a previous volume, Bobotsov-Petrosian and Portisch-Kasparov (*Volume 3, Game Nos.43 and 44*).

19 ♖e1 h5! 20 g3 h4 21 ♗g2 ♗c8 22 ♘f4 hxg3 23 hxg3 ♕g5 24 ♗h3!? (in order, after exchanging the light-squared bishops, to play ♔g2 and ♖h1) **24...f5!?**

Black is against simplification – a clear indication that he is playing for a win!

25 ♗g2 (now 25 ♔g2 would have left the bishop out of play at h3) **25...♕h6**

With the obvious intention of playing ...g6-g5 followed by ...f5-f4, and possibly switching the rook to the h-file.



26 ♘xd5!

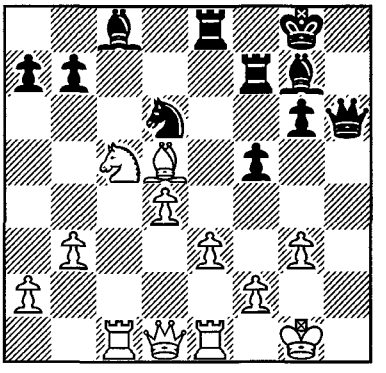
Simagin, a player of attacking style, tries to change the course of events with the help of a piece sacrifice. White would have lost after 26 f3? g5 27 ♘fd3 (27 ♘h3 f4) 27...♖xe3! 28 ♖xe3 ♗xd4, while if 26 ♗f3 g5 27 ♘h5 Korchnoi was planning 27...♖e7 (threatening 28...g4 29 ♘xg7 gxf3) 28 ♗e2 f4 with a strong attack. Neither 28 ♘xg7 ♖xg7 29 ♖c2 ♖h7 30 ♘d3 f4, nor 28 g4 ♘e4!? 29 gxf5 ♗xf5 30 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 31 ♗g4 ♖ef7 etc. is any better for White.

26...cxd5 27 ♗xd5+ ♖f7!

A very interesting moment – one of those, that says much about the strength of a player. The character of the position has suddenly changed: after lengthy manoeuvring it is time for unclear tactical complications with unbalanced material. A player has to operate with quite different categories, and it is not everyone who would be able to instantly retune and correctly evaluate the new situation. But Korchnoi found a way of continuing the fight for the initiative by a counter-sacrifice of the

exchange: 'That day I did not want to play defensively. Indeed, would White really give up his powerful bishop, which covers all the light squares in his position, for some pitiful rook?!'

Let us see what other replies would have promised. In the event of 27...♘f7 28 ♘xb7 White has three pawns for the piece with a solid position, and it can be considered that he has made a favourable exchange (after 28...♗e6 Korchnoi advises 29 ♗g2 'with an unclear game'). After 27...♔h8? 28 ♔g2 ♕h7 29 ♖h1 ♗h6 30 ♕f3! Black is in difficulties on account of the pin on the h-file. 27...♔h7 is better, but here too White plays 28 ♔g2! (instead of Korchnoi's 28 f4 g5 29 ♖c2 ♕f6 30 ♖h2+ ♗h6 31 ♔f2 ♔g7 with advantage to Black) 28...♕g5 29 ♖h1+ ♗h6 30 ♘d3 or 30 ♕f3 with the ideas of ♘xb7 and ♘d3-e5, as well as ♖h4 and ♖ch1, retaining real compensation for the sacrificed piece.



28 e4!?

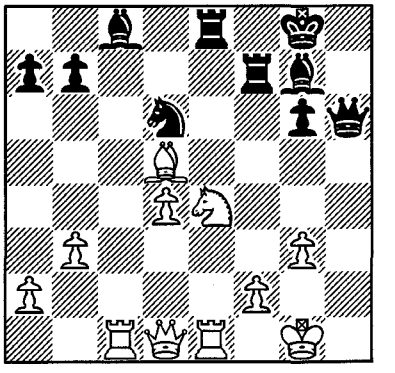
White continues to play for the opening of the position, hoping to exploit the pin on the rook. '...b7-b6 was threatened, and, after the retreat of the knight, ...♗b7 or...♗e6' (Korchnoi). If 28 ♗xf7+ (28 ♕f3 g5!) there could have followed 28...♘xf7 (28...♔xf7 29 ♕f3 ♖h8 30 ♕d5+ is not so clear) 29 ♕f3 g5! Now it is bad to play 30 ♘xb7 g4 31 ♕d5 ♗e6 32 ♕b5 (32 ♕c6 ♖c8, and the threat of ..♘g5-f3+ forces White to give up his queen) 32...♖b8 followed by ...♘g5-f3+ and a terribly strong attack on the light squares. The cautious 30 ♕h1 (30 ♕d5 ♖d8) 30...♕xh1+ 31 ♔xh1 also favours Black in view of 31...b6 32 ♘d3 ♗b7+ 33 ♔g1 ♗f3!

28...fxe4

Another non-trivial decision. 28...f4 (but not 28...b6? 29 e5) 29 e5 fxg3 30 fxg3 ♕h3 31 ♕f3 would have led to complicated play. But here it would not be easy for Black to develop an attack on the king, and the pair of passed pawns in the centre would have given White fair prospects. And this would have been something of an achievement for Simagin: his combination would have forced the opponent not only to solve unexpected practical problems, but also to go in for a definite strategic risk.

29 ♘xe4

Things appear to be desperate for Black (29...♘xe4 30 ♖xe4 and wins).



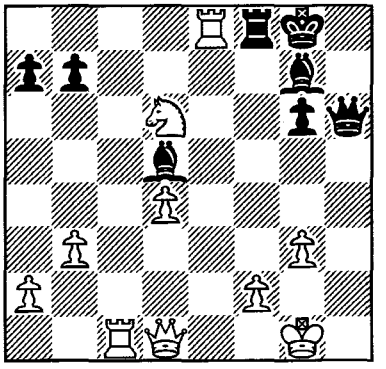
29...♗e6!!

'A defence that was not anticipated by my opponent.' (Korchnoi). A fantastic, amazingly pretty move: Black does not simply eliminate the pin – he also leaves his rook to be taken with check!

30 ♘xd6 ♗xd5 31 ♖xe8+ ♖f8

As we see, Korchnoi not only rose to the occasion when the character of the play changed sharply, but also managed to set his opponent the most unpleasant problems. After all, Simagin himself was striving to seize the initiative, but instead of this he is forced to

parry threats (for the moment – mate in one move).



32 ♖e4?

A blunder, leading to the loss of a piece. 'It was essential to play 32 f3 ♖xe8 33 ♘xe8 ♕e3+ 34 ♔g2 ♕xe8 35 ♕e1, 35 ♕d3 or 35 ♖c7 – in each case with a roughly equal game.' (Korchnoi). Even so, Black's two bishops would have been slightly stronger than the rook and two pawns and they might have seriously disturbed the white king. Evidently it was this that Simagin did not like.

32...g5!

A surprise: from h6, where it was creating threats on the h-file, suddenly the queen also attacks the knight at d6. 'My opponent probably missed this. If this move, this idea – of winning the knight! – had not been available to Black, with 32...♗xd4 he would have gained an initiative, compensating for his material deficit.' (Korchnoi). But in my opinion, after 33 ♖c2! ♗xe4 (33...♖xf2? clearly does not work) 34 ♘xe4 ♕g7 35 ♕g4 White is a healthy pawn to the good.

33 ♖c7 ♕xd6 34 ♖ee7

If 34 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 35 ♖e5 Black was planning 35...♗f3!, locking in the enemy king: 36 ♖xg5+ (36 ♕d2 ♕h6!; 36 ♕c1 g4) 36...♔f6 37 ♕d2 ♖h8 and wins. The desperate attack along the 7th rank also achieves nothing: the bishops defend all the squares. The fate of the game is decided.

34...♗f6 35 ♖ed7

35 ♖cd7! ♕c6 36 ♖c7 was a tougher defence, practically forcing the queen sacrifice 36...♗xe7! 37 ♖xc6 bxc6 'with a clear advantage to Black' (Korchnoi). It is probably enough for a win: the lone queen can hardly prevent the rook and two bishops from creating decisive threats to the white king.

35...♕e6 36 ♖xd5

White would have lost after both 36 ♕b1 ♗e4 37 ♕e1 ♕g4 with the threat of ...♕f3, and 36 ♔h2 ♗e5 (Korchnoi) or 36...♗xd4!

36...♕xd5 37 ♕h5 ♗g7 (easily parrying the last farewell threat by the queen) **38 ♕g6 ♕xd4 39 ♕e6+ ♔h7 40 ♕h3+ ♔g6 41 ♕e6+ ♖f6 42 ♕e2 b5 43 g4 ♔h6 0-1**

In this game Korchnoi once again displayed his best qualities – his ability to react suitably to a changing situation and to set problems that were psychologically the most unpleasant for his opponent, plus precise calculation at the critical moments.

In July 1960 the USSR Champion shared first place with Reshevsky in a major international tournament in Buenos Aires, ahead of 18 other competitors, including Szabo, Taimanov, Evans, Olafsson, Unzicker, Gligoric, Benko, Uhlmann, Ivkov and the young Fischer. And in the autumn he made a successful debut for the Soviet team at the Olympiad in Leipzig: +8 =5 on board 4. I should remind you that the top three boards were Tal, Botvinnik and Keres, and the two reserves – Smyslov and Petrosian. A fantastic line-up!

That memorable year was crowned by victory over Botvinnik in the traditional Moscow-Leningrad match. Botvinnik was actively preparing for his return match with Tal, and a duel with the new national champion was simply good training for him. 'Well, and for me to play the "Patriarch" – as he was then called – was something out of the ordinary!' writes Korchnoi, and with his customary mercilessness to himself he criticises his notes of nearly half a century

earlier: 'For a young grandmaster it is pleasant to boast about his win over the ex-world champion, at the same time emphasising the consistency of his play and the logical nature of the result. But in Aesopian Soviet language "I make things difficult for myself" it means that in home analysis I was unable to find a win in the event of the bishop manoeuvre to h3. Meanwhile, there was a win... A weakly-played game by both contestants.'

He also performed splendidly in the 28th USSR Championship, a Zonal event (Moscow, January-February 1961): 1. Petrosian – 13½ out of 19; 2. Korchnoi – 13; 3-4. Geller and Stein – 12; 5-6. Smyslov and Spassky – 11, etc.

The finishing drama of the 24-year-old Spassky has been described in Volume 3 (*Game Nos.53 and 57*). Today Boris Vasilievich explains his failure by a kind of 'ill fate' or 'divine retribution' and thinks that, had he finished in the first four, chess history could have turned out differently: 'If I had also gone through to the Interzonal, the Candidates tournament on Curaçao could well have been won by Keres.' True, the outcome of the tournament on Curaçao could also have been different, if Stein had played in it instead of Benko... However – one is obliged to repeat once again – history does not recognise the subjunctive mood.

Soon after that championship the Tal-Botvinnik return match began. Shortly before it both contestants, via their seconds, expressed the desire to work with Korchnoi. His reaction was eloquent: 'I declined them both. Not because I thought that I had nothing to learn from Botvinnik or Tal, but I considered that if I myself was intending to fight for the title of world champion, I should not go and work with them. In our time many young players behave differently...'

Korchnoi's debut in the Interzonal tournament, which took place a year later, caused his supporters considerable anxiety: a sensational fiasco in a game with Cuellar, defeats against Portisch and Fischer... Apart from the young American, Petrosian and Geller confidently reached their goal. But, nevertheless, Korchnoi also gained entry to the Candidates tournament, scoring nine wins and gaining a draw in a highly important game from the last round. Whereas Stein, who was level with him, lost, and although he occupied a qualifying sixth place, he turned out to be the 'superfluous fourth' in the dispute of the Soviet stars, who because of the whim of FIDE had only three vacancies.

The 'battle of eight' on the distant island of Curaçao (May-June 1962) has already been partly covered in Volume 4, in the chapter 'The Russian Pact'. In fact the pact consisted in three of the Soviet grandmasters – Petrosian, Keres and Geller – drawing all the games among themselves. And endeavouring to win against the weakened Tal (he played soon after a major operation) and the uncompromising Korchnoi and Fischer, to say nothing about Benko and Filip, who were inferior in class.

But initially this pragmatic plan did not work: after starting with four draws, Korchnoi then suddenly surged into the lead, gaining three successive wins – over Fischer, Filip (in 101 moves, after two days' play) and Tal! Here is the first of these:

Game 9
R.Fischer-V.Korchnoi
Candidates Tournament,
Curaçao 1962, 5th round
Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence B09

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6

Korchnoi has played not more than a dozen games in his entire career with this defence, considering it 'not altogether correct'. On this occasion, taking account of the narrowness of his opponent's opening repertoire, he was trying to catch him in a specific variation.

4 f4 (4 ♘f3 – *Game Nos.73 and 77*) **4...♗g7 5 ♘f3 0-0**

The alternative is 5...c5 6 dxc5 (6 ♗b5+ ♗d7 Savon-Korchnoi, 41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973) 6...♕a5 7 ♗d3 ♕xc5 8 ♕e2 ♗g4! 9 ♗e3 ♕a5 10 0-0 0-0 11 h3 (11 ♖ad1 ♘c6 12 ♗c4 ♘h5!? Spassky-Fischer, 17th matchgame, Reykjavik 1972) 11...♗xf3 12 ♕xf3 ♘c6 13 ♘e2?! ♘d7 14 c3? ♘de5! 15 fxe5 ♘xe5 16 ♕g3 ♘xd3... 0-1 (Hübner-Korchnoi, Skelleftea 1989).

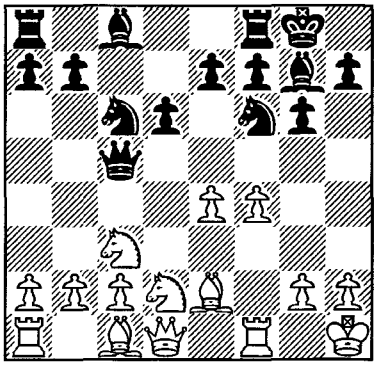
6 ♗e2

'According to the state of theory in the summer of 1962, 6 ♗e2 was the best move in this position.' (Korchnoi). After this game everyone, including Fischer, switched to 6 ♗d3 (*Volume 4, Game No.72*).

6...c5 7 dxc5 ♕a5 8 0-0 ♕xc5+ 9 ♔h1 ♘c6 10 ♘d2

An idea of Evgeny Vasyukov, who himself thought up its refutation. 10 ♗d3 followed by ♕e1 and ♗e3 is better (Boleslavsky-Ufimtsev, Sverdlovsk 1951), or first 10 ♕e1.

'Prior to the tournament,' Korchnoi remembers, 'in a holiday home near Moscow, I had studied this very position with my helper, grandmaster Vasyukov. Generally speaking, at that time I did not play the Pirc Defence, and its various branches were totally unfamiliar to me, but Vasyukov persuaded me to take a risk: Fischer was bound to play this way! And Fischer did not let me down.'



10...a5!

A strong novelty. At that time 10...♘d4 11 ♘b3 ♘xb3 12 axb3 (Vasyukov-Bastrikov, Kiev 1957) or 10...♗e6 11 ♘b3 ♕b6 12 g4! was judged to favour White.

11 ♘b3?!

'This soon creates serious difficulties for White. Non-routine moves demand non-routine replies to refute them,' writes Korchnoi, who recommends 11 ♘c4. Here are some sample variations:

1) 11...♘g4 12 ♘d5! (12 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 13 ♕xg4 ♕xc4 is insipid) 12...♘f2+ 13 ♖xf2 ♕xf2 14 ♗e3 ♕h4 15 ♘cb6! (not 15 g3 ♕h3 Westerinen-Donner, Bamberg 1968) 15...♖b8 16 ♘xc8 ♖f(b)xc8 17 g3 ♕h6 18 f5 g5 19 ♕d2! (not 19 h4 ♗xb2 Filipowicz-Plater, Warsaw 1964) 19...♗f6 20 h4 or 19...♗xb2 20 ♗xg5 ♕g7 21 ♖f1, and 'Black has a difficult position';

2) 11...♗g4! 12 ♗e3 ♕h5 13 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 14 ♗g1 b5! 15 ♘b6 ♗d4! 16 h3 ♗xg1 17 ♘xa8 ♘f2+ 18 ♖xf2 ♕xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♗xf2 with equality, or 14 h3, and after 14...♘xe3 15 ♕xh5 gxh5 16 ♘xe3 'White's position is slightly better', but 14...♗xc3!? 15 bxc3 ♘f6 (Korchnoi) is interesting, or 14...b5! with easy equality.

11...♕b6 12 a4

Defending against the threat of ...a5-a4-a3. The alternatives were unfavourable: 12 ♘d5 ♘xd5 13 exd5 a4! 14 dxc6?! (14 ♘d2 ♘b4 15 ♘c4 ♕c5) 14...axb3 15 cxb7 ♖xa2! (Korchnoi) 16 bxc8♕ ♖xc8 17 ♗d2 ♗xb2 and wins, or 12 a3 a4 13 ♘d2 ♕c5 or 13...♕d4.

12...♘b4

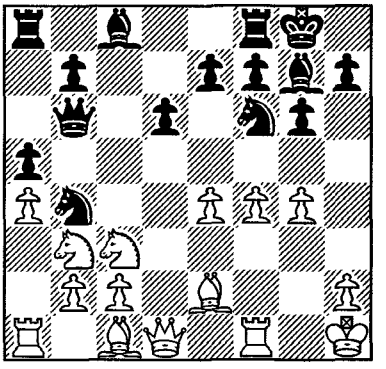
As a result of the slow manoeuvre ♘f3-d2-b3 a favourable version for Black of the Dragon Variation has arisen.

13 g4?

A standard attacking move, but here it runs into a powerful counter. Practice has shown that White does not even have equal chances after 13 f5 d5 14 e5 ♘e4!, or 13 ♗f3 ♗e6 14 ♘d4 ♗c4 15 ♘ce2 (15 ♖e1 ♘g4!) 15...e5 16 ♘b5 d5!, or 13 ♖a3 ♖d8 14 ♗f3 d5 15 e5 ♘e4 16 ♘d4 f6!

However, Korchnoi's recommendation 13 ♘d2! is better, and in the event of 13...d5?! 14

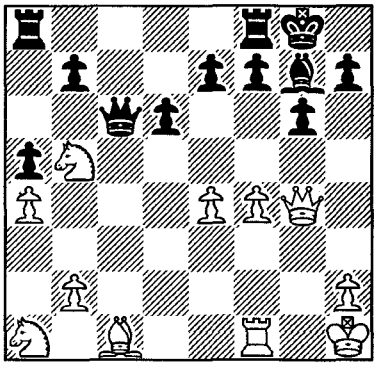
e5 ♘e4 15 ♘cxe4 dxe4 16 c3 ♘d3 17 ♘xe4 ♘xc1 (17...♘xb2? 18 ♕d4!) 18 ♕xc1 ♗f5 19 ♘g3 Black does not have sufficient compensation for the pawn, while if 13...♗e6, then 14 f5 with sharp play. 13...♖d8 or 13...♗d7 is also unclear. Indeed, 'it is hard to suggest how Black can maintain his advantage.'



13...♗xg4! 14 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 15 ♕xg4 ♘xc2 16 ♘b5

After 16 ♘d5?! ♕xb3 17 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 18 f5 ♘xa1 19 f6 ♗xf6 20 ♖xf6 ♖fe8 21 ♘d5 ♕c4! 22 ♘c3 (22 ♗h6? ♖xe4) 22...♘b3 23 ♗h6 ♘c5 or 23...♔g8 (Korchnoi) Black repels the attack and should be able to convert his exchange advantage.

16...♘xa1 17 ♘xa1 ♕c6



'For the moment White is alright materially, but his pieces are badly placed, and loss of material cannot be avoided.' (Korchnoi)

18 f5

Hopeless alternatives are 18 ♕f3 ♖fc8 19 ♔g2 ♕c4! 20 b3 ♕xc1, or 19 ♘b3 ♕c4, stealing up on the a4-pawn, or 19 ♗e3 ♗xb2 20 ♖b1 (20 ♘a7 ♕xa4; 20 ♘b3 ♕c4!) 20...♗f6 21 ♘a7 ♖xa7 22 ♗xa7 ♕xa4 and Black wins.

18...♕c4 19 ♕f3 ♕xa4 20 ♘c7 ♕xa1 21 ♘d5?

The decisive error. As shown by Korchnoi, it was essential to play 21 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 22 fxg6 fxg6 23 ♕b3+! (if 23 ♕f7+ ♔h8 24 ♕xe7, in the hope of 24...♕a4 25 ♗e3 ♖e8?? 26 ♗d4!! when White wins, then simply 24...♕b1! 25 ♕xb7 ♖e8 26 ♖e1 ♕d3, winning) 23...♔h8 24 ♕xb7 with drawing chances in view of the bad position of the black queen: 24...♖f8 25 ♖xf8+ ♗xf8 26 ♕c8, or 24...♖g8 25 ♕b3 (25 ♕xe7!?) 25...♕b1 26 ♕c4.

21...♖ae8 22 ♗g5

After 22 ♗h6 ♕xb2 23 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 24 ♗xg7, according to Korchnoi, the 'cynical' move 24...f6! would have won.

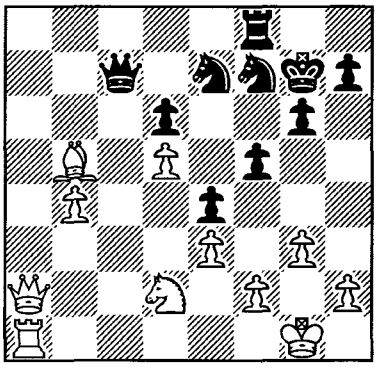
22...♕xb2 23 ♗xe7 (or 23 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 24 ♗xe7 ♗e5!) **23...♗e5! 24 ♖f2** (24 ♕h3 ♕e2) **24...♕c1+ 25 ♖f1 ♕h6 26 h3 gxf5 27 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 28 ♘e7+ ♔h8 29 ♘xf5 ♕e6 30 ♖g1 a4 31 ♖g4 ♕b3 32 ♕f1 a3 0-1**

After the first quarter the Leningrad grandmaster, with 5 out of 7, was a point ahead of Geller, Keres and Petrosian. In the second quarter he again began with four draws, and after 11 rounds he was leading together with Geller, half a point ahead of Keres and Petrosian, and one and a half ahead of Fischer.

But playing flat-out in conditions of tropical heat had its effect: he became terribly tired. 'He was not ready for such an important event, in particular physically,' writes Viktor Vasiliev. 'Already at the end of the first quarter, when his rivals were timorously observing his successes, Korchnoi realised perfectly well that he was incapable of fighting for first place. His play was laboured, and after every game he felt tired and jaded.'

Knowing this, one is no longer surprised by the tragic blunder that occurred in Korchnoi's game from the second quarter with Fischer.

Game 10
V.Korchnoi-R.Fischer
Candidates Tournament,
Curaçao 1962, 12th round



31 ♗c6?

A mental black-out! White should have included 31 ♕b2+!, retaining his extra pawn and every chance of winning: 31...♘e5 32 ♘c4, or 31...♔g8 32 ♗c6 ♘xc6 (otherwise b4-b5) 33 ♖c1 ♘fe5 34 dxc6 etc.

31...♘xc6 32 ♖c1?? ♕a7!, and Black won a piece, and with it the game. 'Yes, it was terrible to lose in this way to the self-confident American,' wrote the Soviet press.

True, after this drama he still achieved, and in good style, his 'regular win' against Filip. But then he lost to Tal (the only time for many years!) and finished the second quarter only fourth, a point behind Geller and Petrosian and half a point behind Keres.

Yuri Averbakh, one of the Soviet grandmasters' trainers, recalls: 'After the first half of the tournament our group expanded: the wives of the contestants flew in, which brought a certain diversity to their measured life. A short break was arranged, which all the contestants spent on St Martin, an even smaller island than Curaçao. There they swam and sunbathed, and five days later they again sat down to play. The start of the second half was marked by a wonderful spurt by Keres – 3 out of 3! But he was unable to break away: Petrosian and Geller were still just half a point behind him.'

It would appear that the week on the beach was the last straw for Korchnoi: at the start of the third quarter he lost in turn to Geller, Petrosian and Keres... 'That which happened with him on Curaçao was something of a record. And not only in his individual chess career: chess history, which tells a number of tragic stories, can hardly remember an instance when, in a tournament of such scale, one of the leaders suffered four successive defeats!' (V.Vasiliev)

Korchnoi conclusively dropped out of the fight for first place and in the end he finished 4 points behind Petrosian, 3½ behind Keres and Geller, and half a point behind Fischer. A slight consolation was provided by his win over the American in the third quarter, enabling him to win their mini-match (2½-1½). A characteristic touch: on all of the moves in his 27 games, the tournament winner, the pragmatic Petrosian, spent a total of 48 hours 40 minutes, whereas the implacable fighter Korchnoi spent 72 hours 10 minutes, i.e. one and a half times more!

After such a failure, many could have lost heart, but not Korchnoi. On returning home, he set about trying to eliminate his chess deficiencies with redoubled energy. 'In Curaçao I lacked the discipline and technique to convert an advantage at high level (although I did possess some technique!)' Viktor Lvovich wrote five years later. 'But where there was great resistance, haste appeared – perhaps my nerves failed me (*yes, technique is all nerves, as Alekhine once commented – G.K.*). Towards the end of a game I would become tired, and as a result – blunders. I again had to sit down with my books, and study the games of Rubinstein and other experts on the endgame. Six months later, at the championship of the country in Erevan, I felt much more confident.'

Indeed, in the 30th USSR Championship (Erevan, November-December 1962) he fought only for first place, and with success: 1. Korchnoi – 14 out of 19 (after starting with 11 out of 13!); 2-3. Taimanov and Tal – 13½; 4. Kholmov – 13; 5. Spassky – 12½; 6. Stein – 11½, etc. Soon this triumph was supplemented by a brilliant victory in the Capablanca Memorial tournament (Havana 1963): 1. Korchnoi – 16½ out of 21; 2-4. Geller, Pachman and Tal – 16, etc. According to the press, the experts observed some obvious changes in his play: Korchnoi's style had become more flexible, more universal than before.

Earlier he had stated: 'I don't like to be the first to attack, just as I don't like to sacrifice my pieces and pawns.' But now he increasingly often made moves, about which he would later write: 'On this occasion, betraying my rules, I fought for the initiative, I sacrificed a pawn.' In addition, he learned how to skilfully exploit even a slight positional advantage. But at the same time Korchnoi realised perfectly well that he had not achieved that technical mastery for which he had aimed.

Towards the end of the same year a temporary decline occurred in his play, which was practically unavoidable, given the fierce rivalry that reigned in Soviet chess. In the 31st USSR Championship (1963) which, I should remind you, was a qualifying event not for the Interzonal, but to a double-round Zonal tournament, Korchnoi finished 10th and was allowed into the next stage only as an 'outstanding grandmaster'. But also in the Zonal 'tournament of seven' he finished in only a share of 5th-6th places, after losing at the finish to Stein (*Volume 3, Game No.63*) and Spassky.

And again he did not lose heart! I was interested to learn that, like myself many years later, one of the books that Korchnoi constantly had to hand was a collection of 300 games of Alekhine, and he often turned to that chess genius for advice. Like Alekhine, he could well have said: 'By means of chess I formed my character.' Or: 'Chess teaches you first and foremost to be objective. In chess you can become a great master, only by recognising your mistakes and deficiencies.'

To another important thought of Alekhine – 'To become a grandmaster, apart from great talent, you must also have a secure material future and great capacity for work' – Korchnoi added the words: 'A whole-hearted love for chess is also needed. The time of natural geniuses (Capablanca), who devoted little attention to preparation, has passed. Now success requires a great deal of work.'

And he, already twice USSR Champion, continued working on chess like no one else (except, perhaps, Fischer). He was 33 years old – at the very height of his powers... Later he bitterly lamented that he had lost a great deal of time in his youth, that he had not been taught to play correctly, to fight fiercely for the initiative: 'I realised that I had to re-learn, that my play was littered with deficiencies, and that I was frequently unfamiliar with the rudiments of grandmaster chess. And for a good ten years I endeavoured to master these rudiments. In the end when, fully armed with my knowledge and understanding of chess, at the age of forty plus I was ready to battle with anyone for the title of world champion, I had already exhausted much of my God-given energy. Therefore I did not in fact manage to become world champion...'

Opening for all Times

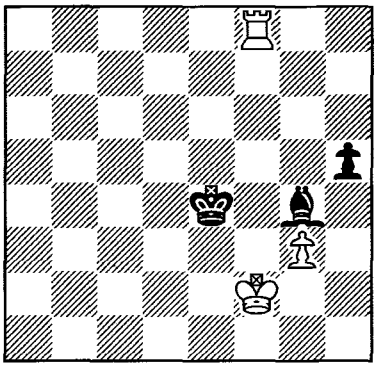
Korchnoi's next peak was his convincing victory in the 32nd USSR Championship (Kiev 1964/65). Two years later he was to write: 'Versatility helped. I think it was at that time that I achieved my best understanding of positions.' After his start – 10 out of 11! – the fate of the gold medal was already practically decided. Among those defeated were Shamkovich, Lein, Averbakh, Kholmov, Bronstein, Tal...

A key game in the battle for first place was the one with Tal. It was adjourned in an endgame with rook and knight against rook and

bishop, in which Korchnoi stood better. The master A.Petersons, a participant in the tournament, recalls: 'Since, on account of illness, Tal had many other "arrears", for a long time the game was not resumed and was at the centre of the attention of both the players and the numerous fans. Initially the opinion was that White should win. But here Black's interests began to be defended by none other than Tigran Petrosian, who suggested that the most probable outcome was a draw. The Riga players who were in Kiev – Tal, Koblents, Klovans and Petersons – spent many hours analysing the adjourned position and also came to the conclusion that the game should end in a draw.'

On the resumption Korchnoi won the exchange by force, but Tal resisted desperately, pinning his hopes on the extremely limited material remaining. The crux came on the 68th move.

Game 11
V.Korchnoi-M.Tal
32nd USSR Championship,
Kiev 1964/65, 9th round



68...♗h3?

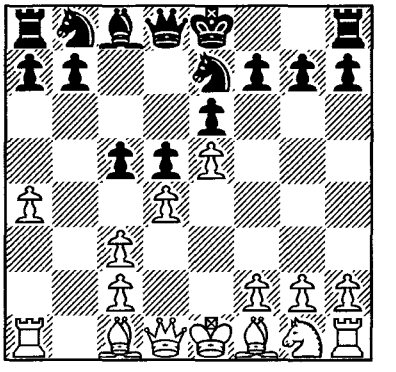
Allowing the white king to escape. After 68...♔d3 Black would have gained a draw, for example: 69 ♖e8 ♔d4 70 ♔e1 ♔d3 71 ♖e7 ♗f3 (Petersons).

69 ♔e2! ♗g4+ 70 ♔d2 ♗f5 71 ♖f7 ♗g4 72 ♖f4+ ♔e5 73 ♔e3 ♗e6 74 ♖f8 ♗h3 75 ♖a8 ♔f5 76 ♖a5+ ♔g6 77 ♔f4 h4 (if 77...♗f1, then 78 ♖g5+ ♔h6 79 ♖d5, followed by ♖d6+ and ♔g5) **78 ♖a6+ ♔g7 79 gxh4**, and Black resigned on the 93rd move.

Also important was the game with the Moscow grandmaster Vasyukov, a player with a sharp attacking style, who played only 1 e4. It need hardly be said that in reply Korchnoi chose his favourite French Defence. After a mistake on the 12th move he ended up in a difficult position, but according to the evidence of the press, 'as usual, he maintained enviable composure, unexpectedly seized the initiative, and the situation instantly changed in his favour.'

Game 12
E.Vasyukov-V.Korchnoi
32nd USSR Championship,
Kiev 1964/65, 10th round
French Defence C19

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 a4



Here, as in the 7 ♘f3 variation, Korchnoi's practical and creative results are no worse than after 7 ♕g4 (*Game Nos.3, 14 and 27*). Although the opening did not always turn out in his favour, he masterfully maintained the tension in the complicated 'French' middlegame.

7...♘bc6 8 ♘f3 ♗d7

Later, following the example set by

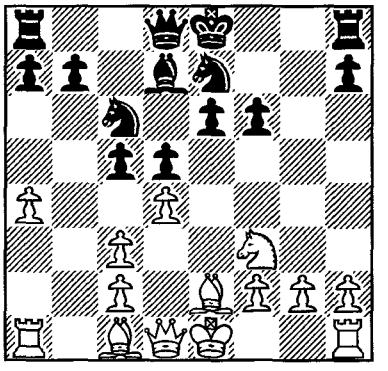
Korchnoi, 8...♕a5! became almost automatic, forcing 9 ♕d2 (*Game No.22*) or 9 ♗d2 (*Game No.23*).

9 ♗e2 (Fischer preferred 9 ♗d3 – *Volume 4, Game No.95*) **9...f6?!**

A typical undermining move, although, as practice has shown, it is better carried out slightly later, when the white bishop (or queen) has taken up a relatively passive position at d2. True, 9...♕a5 can now be met by 10 0-0!, since after 10...♕xc3?! 11 ♗d2 ♕b2 12 ♖b1 ♕a3 13 ♖xb7 White seizes the initiative.

In those years they often played 9...♕c7 10 0-0 f6 (instead of the old 10...b6 11 ♗a3 ♘a5 Tolush-Botvinnik, Moscow 1943/44) 11 exf6 gxf6 12 c4, but 12 ♗a3! is stronger: 12...c4 (12...cxd4?! 13 ♘xd4) 13 ♕d2, or 13 ♖e1 and ♗f1, probing the 'holes' in the opponent's position and relying on the power of the bishop at a3. White is promised less by 12 dxc5 e5! 13 c4 ♗e6 14 cxd5 ♘xd5 15 ♘d2 0-0-0 16 ♘e4 ♘c3! 17 ♘d6+ ♕xd6 18 cxd6 ♘xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♘d4 with equality (Panchenko-Bagirov, Chelyabinsk 1972).

10 exf6 gxf6



11 dxc5

To me, it seems more promising to play 11 0-0! ♕c7 12 ♗a3 (cf. the previous note), while if 11...♕a5, then 12 ♗a3 or 12 c4, and it is hard for Black to create counterplay compensating for the weakened position of his king.

11...♕a5

11...♕c7 12 ♘d4! was less good for Black, but he could have considered 11...e5!? 12 ♘h4 (12 0-0 ♕c7!, as in the aforementioned Panchenko-Bagirov game) 12...♕a5 13 ♗h5+ ♔d8, planning ...♔c7, ...♖ag8 and ...♔b8 with sharp play.

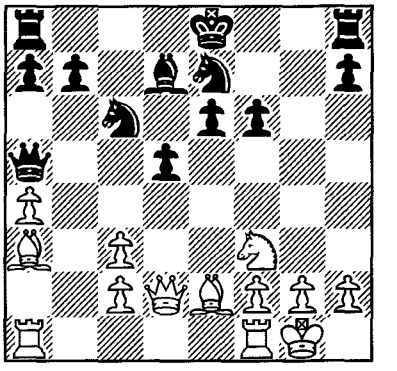
12 ♕d2?!

A loss of a tempo, leading to one of the lines with 8...♕a5. 12 0-0! is more accurate, when it is dangerous for Black to play either 12...♕xc5? 13 ♕d2 and ♗a3!, or 12...♕xc3?! 13 ♖b1 0-0-0 (13...♕xc5 14 ♖xb7) 14 ♗b2 ♕xc5 15 ♗xf6 ♖hf8 16 ♖b5 ♕d6 17 ♗h4. And if 12...e5 White can fight for an advantage by 13 c4 ♗e6 (13...dxc4 or 13...d4 – 14 ♘d2!) 14 cxd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗d2 ♕xc5 16 c4 etc.

12...♕xc5?

Now White's dark-squared bishop becomes terribly strong and Korchnoi's position becomes critical. Subsequently Black has achieved reasonable results by playing 12...0-0-0 or 12...e5.

13 ♗a3 ♕a5 14 0-0



It is obvious that sooner or later c3-c4 will follow and Black will face a gruelling struggle for a draw: his pawn structure is broken, and in addition White has two formidable bishops. But it is interesting to follow how Korchnoi, deeply and creatively delving into the secrets of the position, solves his difficult problems and gradually, albeit not without the 'help' of his opponent, creates dangerous counterplay.

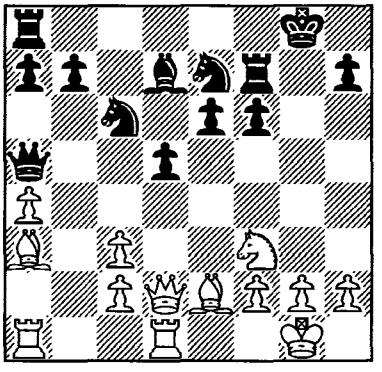
14...0-0

Black has to restrict himself to kingside castling: if 14...0-0-0 White has the unpleasant 15 ♘d4! (with the threat of ♘b5) 15...♘xd4 16 ♗xe7 ♘xe2+ 17 ♕xe2 ♖de8 18 ♗xf6 ♖hg8 19 ♗e5 and the counterattack on the g-file is too late, while if 14...e5, then 15 ♖fb1 0-0-0 16 ♖b5 ♕c7 17 ♖ab1.

15 ♖fd1?!

A delay. 15 c4 ♕xd2 16 ♘xd2 also achieves little, but after 15 ♖fb1! 'Black is in considerable difficulties' (Petersons), for example: 15...♕c7 16 ♘d4!, or 15...♗c8 16 ♖b5 ♕c7 17 c4.

15...♖f7



16 c4

'I would have rather gone into a lion's cage than exchanged queens with White in this position,' Tal joked in later analysis, suggesting 16 ♕c1 'if there is nothing better'. Indeed, after 16...♕xc3 17 ♖d3 ♕a5 18 ♘h4 or 17 ♗b2 ♕a5 18 c4 White has good compensation for the pawn, and therefore 16...e5 17 c4 ♗e6 is better, with a complicated game.

16...♕xd2 (16...♖c8 was more cunning, but then White could have kept the queens on by 17 c3) **17 ♖xd2 ♖c8** (17...♘a5!?) **18 a5 ♘g6 19 a6! b6 20 ♖ad1?**

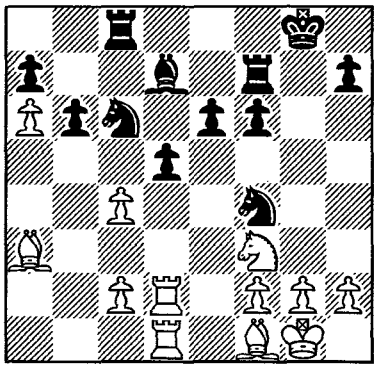
A seemingly natural move, but the black knight should not have been allowed to go to f4. However, 20 g3 (Petersons) is repulsed by 20...dxc4 21 ♖ad1 (21 ♗xc4 ♘ce5 with equality) 21...♘b8! etc.

And only the timely 20 cxd5! exd5 21 g3 (but not 21 ♖xd5?! ♘f4 22 ♖d2 ♘xe2+ 23 ♖xe2 ♗g4!, or 21 c4?! ♘a5!), as well as 21 ♗d6(b2) or the subtle 21 ♖e1, would have condemned Black to a difficult defence: his d5-pawn is very weak, and any attack on the a7-pawn, 'nailed' to the board by the a6-pawn, may prove fatal for him.

20...♘f4 21 ♗f1

21 cxd5 is no longer so clear: 21...exd5 22 ♗d6 (22 ♗f1?! ♗g4!, and the rook at d1 is badly placed) 22...♘xe2+ 23 ♖xe2 ♖d8 and ...♗c8!, extracting the 'nail' at a6.

Nevertheless, it appears that White still has the initiative (he is threatening g2-g3 and cxd5). At any event, Korchnoi thought for nearly 50 minutes here. And, as the fans said at the time, he 'did a Korchnoi':



21...e5!?

A non-standard positional pawn sacrifice, all the more unexpected for the reason that 21...♘a5 was perfectly acceptable: after 22 g3 (22 cxd5 ♘xd5 is equal) 22...♘xc4! 23 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 24 gxf4 ♖xf4 Black has good compensation for the piece (he is threatening also to pick up the a6-pawn), while if 22 ♗d6 there can follow 22...♘xc4 (22...e5!?) 23 ♗xf4 ♘xd2 24 ♖xd2 e5 25 ♗h6(g3) ♗e6, when the rook and pawn are no weaker than the bishop and knight. However, Korchnoi is striving not to equalise, but to seize the initiative!

22 cxd5 ♘a5

The picture has changed sharply. Instead of doubled c-pawns, White now has an extra

passed pawn at d5 – and nevertheless the position is completely unclear. This pawn has blocked the frontal action of the rooks, saving Black from pressure on the d-file. He is threatening ...♘c4 (a favourite post for Korchnoi's knights – especially in the Grünfeld Defence), and after the exchange of the bishop for this knight, the a6-pawn will be attacked by the rook from a4 or by the bishop from b5(c8) – and it will become a weakness. In addition, threats along the g-file may arise.

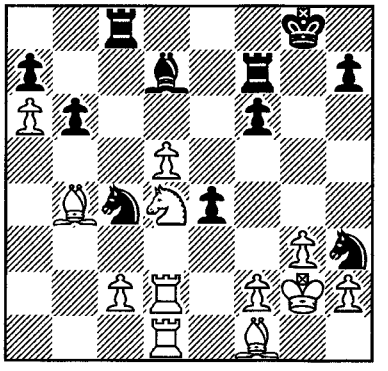
23 g3 (a normal move: in any case Black has fair compensation for the pawn – this is even 'felt' by the machine) **23...♘h3+**

23...♗g4!? was also possible. The complex combination of different factors – both strategic, and tactical – makes White's position rather dangerous. From the practical viewpoint, at any event, on the threshold of a sharp time scramble.

24 ♔g2 ♘c4 25 ♗b4?!

A difficult choice – an attempt to fight for the initiative! 'Vasyukov decided to sacrifice the exchange, so as not to weaken the light squares.' (Petersons). But perhaps he should have been patient and played 25 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 26 ♗b2 ♗g4 27 ♖e1!? However, the weaknesses in White's position would have promised Black a fully equal game.

25...e4!? (25...♘xd2! 26 ♖xd2 ♖g7 or 26...h6, was better, permitting ...♘g5, with some advantage to Black, but Korchnoi was tempted by another, very interesting idea) **26 ♘d4**



26...♘xf2! (a pretty stroke; neither 27 ♖xf2? ♘e3+ nor 27 ♔xf2? e3+ is possible) **27 ♖e1!**

Vasyukov found a strong reply, giving White sufficient compensation for the exchange.

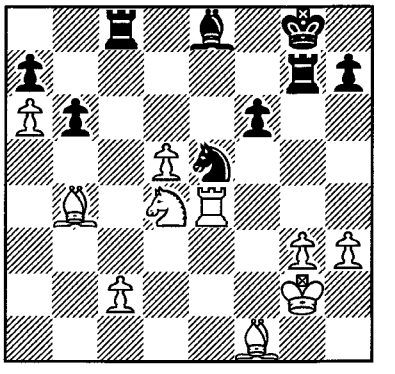
27...♘xd2

'27...e3 was possibly stronger' (Petersons), but after 28 ♖xf2 exf2 29 ♔xf2 ♘e5 30 h3 White has a good game. 27...♘g4 28 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 29 c3 f5 would have maintained approximate equality.

28 ♗xd2 ♘g4 (the somewhat unexpected 28...♘h3 was hardly any stronger: 29 ♖xe4 ♘g5 30 ♖h4 ♖e7 31 ♗d3! ♖e5 32 d6 – 32 c4 b5! – 32...♖d5 33 ♗b4) **29 ♖xe4**

It has to be admitted that the exchange of the f2-pawn for the e-pawn has probably proved more beneficial to White. The subsequent events took place in time-trouble.

29...♘e5 30 ♗b4 ♖g7 31 h3 (31 c3!? with the idea of 31...♖g4 32 ♖e1) **31...♗e8**



32 c4?!

Condemning this pawn to death. Approximate equality would have been retained by 32 ♖f4 ♗g6 33 c3 ♘d3 34 ♗xd3 ♗xd3 35 ♘c6. It was also possible to support the bishop at b4 immediately by 32 c3 (Petersons), for example: 32...♗f7 (32...♗g6 33 ♖e3 or 32...♖d7 33 d6 ♗f7 34 ♖f4 is no better for Black) 33 ♘e6 ♗xe6 34 dxe6 ♖e8 35 e7 ♖gxe7 36 ♗xe7 ♖xe7, and the weakness of the a7-pawn demands a certain accuracy of Black on the way to a draw.

32...♗g6 33 ♖e1?

A second successive mistake. Petersons' recommendation 33 ♖e3 is also dubious in view of 33...♘xc4 34 ♖c3 ♗e4+ and ...♗xd5. It was essential to play 33 ♖f4 ♘xc4 34 ♔f2, and although after 34...♘e5 35 ♖xf6 ♖f7 36 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 37 ♔e3 White is a little worse, he can hope for a draw.

33...♗d3 (now Black wins material, and with it the game) **34 ♘e6 ♖d7**

A solid move in time-trouble. There was a quicker win by the flamboyant 34...♖xc4! 35 ♘xg7 (35 ♗xd3 ♘xd3) 35...♖c2+ 36 ♔h1 (36 ♗e2 ♗xe2) 36...♘f3! with the threat of ...♖h2 mate or ...♘xe1.

35 ♗c3 ♗xc4 36 ♗xe5? (Vasyukov had already lost heart: 36 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 37 ♘f4 was a tougher defence) **36...♗xd5+ 37 ♔g1 fxe5 38 ♖xe5 ♗xe6 39 ♖xe6 ♖c1 40 ♔g2 ♖d2+ 41 ♗e2 ♔f7 42 ♖e4 ♖c6 43 ♔f1,** and here, having checked that the time control had been passed, White resigned (**0-1**).

As a result Viktor Lvovich brilliantly won his third gold medal: 1. Korchnoi – 15 out of 19 (+11=8); 2. Bronstein – 13; 3. Tal – 12½; 4. Stein – 12, etc. And if his unconditional victory in the semi-final, the Leningrad Championship, is added to this, it gives an impressive unbeaten series – 30 out of 36!

'Korchnoi's splendid achievement in the semi-final was evidently not considered by some to be anything outstanding, but all chess fans unanimously acknowledged that in the final the Leningrad grandmaster was truly wonderful. He finished two points ahead of his nearest rival – the only player to achieve such a margin in USSR Championships was Botvinnik 20 years ago,' A.Petersons enthusiastically wrote in the Riga magazine *Shakhmaty*.

And in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* he was echoed by B.Baranov and V.Mikenas:

'Korchnoi has caught up with Keres as regards the number of USSR Championship gold medals. Only Botvinnik has more... Korchnoi has to his credit both spectacular and combinations and fine attacks, as well as consistently conducted positional games and subtle endgames. Whereas Petrosian manoeuvres for a long time, awaiting the moment for decisive action, while Tal pursues the same aim using tactical means, Korchnoi skilfully combines both these methods in his play.

'He often gives up his own active plans and allows the opponent to carry out his ideas, if he sees flaws in them, in order to land a timely counterblow. Perhaps it is this detail that has enabled Korchnoi to discern the incorrectness of many of Tal's attacks and to gain an overwhelming advantage in their individual meetings.

'Korchnoi plays the opening unpretentiously, aiming for a complicated position that is to his taste. And he happily accepts sacrifices, although sometimes his decisions appear outwardly dubious. But it should be born in mind that the Leningrad player goes in for such positions only when his fine intuition, together with his rapid and deep calculation, suggest to him that the opponent's ideas can be refuted. In short, Korchnoi is a subtle psychologist, who is able to recognise his opponent's strong and weak points and direct the play along lines that suit him.'

It was after this national championship that Soviet chess officials first drew attention to the vacuum of star players that arose in the 1960s. 'We must dwell especially on the fact that among the participants there were no young players,' wrote the chess press. 'It is a cheerless paradox that the "youngest" player in the tournament was the 28-year-old former world champion Tal. What is the reason for this alarming fact? Apparently, that we work badly with our chess youth, that we demand little from them, and that we do insufficient to instil fighting qualities in our young players.'

The real reason for the lack of new superstars, the enormous 'black hole' from Tal and Spassky to Karpov, came to light later: at least two generations were lost to chess on account of the Second World War...

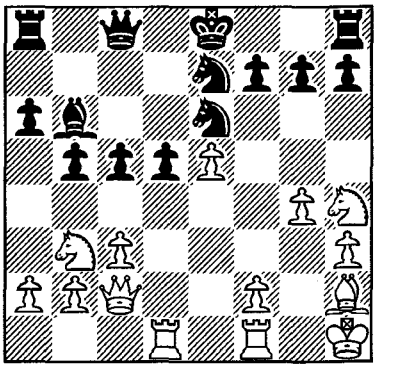
It seems to me that in the USSR they 'worked badly' not so much with the youth, as with certain well-known grandmasters, periodically not sending them to foreign tournaments. Korchnoi was no exception – even with all his titles! Thus in 1963 he and Keres were invited to the Piatigorsky Cup in Los Angeles, but world champion Petrosian also wanted to go there. Then the organisers sent three tickets... 'And even so I was not sent,' remembers Korchnoi. 'Petrosian's wife went to the USA on my ticket.'

In the spring of 1965 the three-times national champion was invited to a strong tournament in Zagreb in Yugoslavia, but instead of this the Sports Committee suggested that he should travel to a small tournament in Hungary. Of course, Korchnoi refused... True, in August he nevertheless visited Hungary and achieved an absolute record result in the Asztalos Memorial tournament – 14½ out of 15! He also scored a significant victory at an international tournament in the autumn in Erevan: 1. Korchnoi – 9½ out of 13; 2-3. Petrosian and Stein – 8½, etc.

At the conclusion of the European Team Championship (Hamburg, June 1965) he was unexpectedly invited to remain in the West. He declined, replying that 'chess players in the USSR are very privileged people'. But later, after he had left, he lamented: 'Eleven years of normal life were lost.' It cannot be denied that a lack of opportunities to take part in worthy tournaments is very damaging to any outstanding player who is at the height of his powers. And so in 1965, by his own admission, Korchnoi had reached the end of his tether: 'I decided to join the Communist Party – as a last chance of easing my lot. And indeed, initially it helped.'

A great stir was caused at that time by Korchnoi's double win over Petrosian in the traditional Moscow-Leningrad match (Moscow, November 1965). After adjourning the first game in a complicated middlegame, the two players began the second the following day. Tigran Vartanovich began with 1 e4 – a rare instance! 'Obviously, preparing for the coming match for the world championship, he was aiming to broaden his opening repertoire,' decided Korchnoi, who replied with the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez. After White's 21st move a sharp situation arose.

Game 13
T.Petrosian-V.Korchnoi
Moscow v. Leningrad Match, 1965



'Here I thought for half an hour,' writes Korchnoi. 'How to parry the knight move to f5? If 21...g6 there follows 22 f4 with the practically forced continuation 22...h5 23 f5 hxg4 24 fxe6 ♖xh4. In my mind I returned several times to this critical position. Black appears to have an attack, but the position did not appeal to me because of its 'irrationality', the fact that it was impossible to decide whom it favoured. And yet I realised that after other continuations White would have an advantage. In a chess player's thinking, a major role is played by psychological factors. He is often guided not by objective evaluations, but his own subjective feelings, those that he can allow himself. Tal would definitely have gone in for this continuation, but I avoided it, because the character of the resulting play was not to my taste. After lengthy thought, hesitations and doubts, I answered differently.'

21...♕c6 22 f4 (22 ♘f5 h5!) **22...d4+ 23**

♕g2 ♕xg2+ 24 ♘xg2 dxc3 with a complicated ending. Things ended in a time scramble, where the last mistake was made by Petrosian. 'In his games with me the nerves of the great strategist often let him down.' This remark says everything about Korchnoi's character!

The game was adjourned in a rook ending that was hopeless for White, and on the resumption he resigned within a few moves. That same day Korchnoi also won the second game. The master A.Geller recalls: 'Viktor gained particular satisfaction from the analysis of games. During the double-round Moscow-Leningrad match on 40 boards, the leader of the visiting team, who had two adjournments with Petrosian, spent a sleepless night analysing several dozen adjourned games of his team-mates, which, however, did not prevent him from winning his two games against the world champion the following morning. Generally speaking, during analysis Korchnoi had the ability to instantly "cut into" the position and quickly find the strongest reply – in this sense he is similar to Alekhine.'

Of Korchnoi's tournament performances in 1966 the most memorable were his victories in Bucharest (12½ out of 14!), in the Chigorin Memorial in Sochi (11½ out of 15), and the best result on the first reserve board at the Olympiad in Havana (10½ out of 13). As usual, he was assisted by the French Defence – for Viktor the Terrible this is truly an opening for all times! The following game gives a good illustration of his manner of play.

Game 14

D.Minic-V.Korchnoi

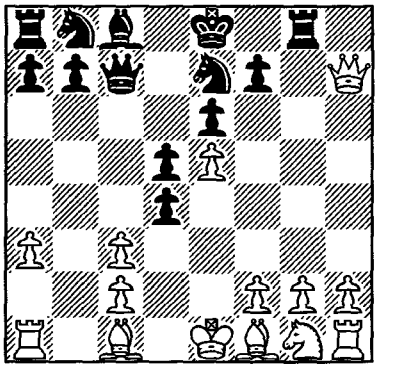
Bucharest 1966, 5th round

French Defence C18

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 ♕g4 (7 a4 – *Game Nos.12, 22 and 23*) **7...♕c7**

The sacrifice of the g7- and h7-pawns is undoubtedly more in keeping with Korchnoi's creative credo than 7...♘f5 (*Game No.3*). However, against Minic a year later in the Yugoslavia-USSR match (Budva 1967) he chose the solid 7...0-0! 8 ♘f3 (nowadays White's hopes are associated with 8 ♗d3!?) 8...♘bc6 9 ♗d3 f5 10 exf6 ♖xf6 11 ♗g5 (11 ♕h5?! h6 12 0-0 c4! 13 ♗e2 ♕a5 14 ♗d2 ♗d7 15 ♖fb1 ♕c7 leads to equality, Mecking-Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1978) 11...♖f7 12 ♕h5 g6 and the players agreed a draw, although after 13 ♕h4 c4 14 ♗e2 ♕a5 15 ♗d2 ♘f5 16 ♕g5 ♗d7 the position is still full of fight (Ljubojevic-Korchnoi, Linares 1985).

8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 cxd4



Black declares his readiness to launch a counterattack at the first opportunity. A very sharp position has arisen, where neither king feels entirely comfortable and the borders between defence and attack are blurred. And those who go in for these complications (irrespective of whether with White or Black) take on a considerable strategic risk.

10 ♔d1

An original if bizarre move, the fashion for which was set by Tal in the 1st game of his 1960 match with Botvinnik (true, there it was 6...♕c7 7 ♕g4 f5 8 ♕g3 ♘e7 9 ♕xg7 ♖g8 10 ♕xh7 cxd4 11 ♔d1!? that occurred – *Volume 2, Game No.127*) and then also by Bronstein. White wants to play ♘f3 and then a possible ♘g5, in contrast to the usual variation with 10 ♘e2 ♘bc6 11 f4 (*Game No.27*).

10...♘bc6!

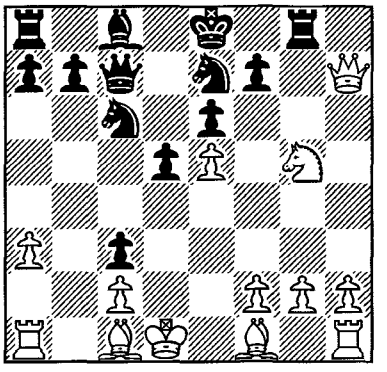
10...♘d7 11 ♘f3 narrows Black's choice to 11...♘xe5 (cf. the following note), since he can hardly equalise with 11...♘c5 12 ♘g5 or 11...♘f8 12 ♕d3 dxc3 (12...♕xc3? 13 ♕xd4) 13 ♖b1 etc.

11 ♘f3 dxc3

Avoiding the dangerous variation 11...♘xe5 12 ♗f4 ♕xc3 13 ♘xe5 ♕xa1+ 14 ♗c1 d3!? (14...♖f8 15 ♗d3 ♗d7 16 ♔e2 is also unclear, Tal-Bronstein, rapidplay match, Moscow 1967) 15 ♕xf7+ ♔d8 16 ♕f6! dxc2+ 17 ♔d2 ♕d4+ 18 ♗d3 ♔e8? 19 ♔e2! ♗d7 20 ♗e3 ♕b2 21 ♖c1 ♖c8 22 ♘xd7 and wins (Bronstein-Uhlmann, Zagreb 1965). It was only 20 years later that the best defence was found – 18...♕c5! (B.Stein-Beliavsky, London 1985).

12 ♘g5!?

An attempted improvement. The game Minic-Ivkov (Titograd 1965) went 12 ♖b1 ♗d7 13 ♗g5 0-0-0 with equality, while after 12 ♗f4 (Kuijpers-Padevsky, Moscow 1963) there is the good reply 12...♕b6!



12...♖f8

A comparatively modest reply. Unclear, irrational play results after 12...♕xe5 13 ♕xf7+ ♔d7 (but not 13...♔d8? 14 ♕xg8+ ♘xg8 15 ♘f7+ and ♘xe5, Minic-Zinn, Halle Zonal 1967) or 12...♘xe5 13 f4 (13 ♗f4 ♕b6!) 13...♖xg5!? (13...f6 has also been played) 14 fxg5 ♘5g6 and 15...e5!, and the powerful pawn centre, together with the sorry position of the enemy king, gives Black every reason for optimism (Adorjan-Portisch, Hungarian Championship 1966), as well as the newly fashionable 12...♘d8!? 13 f4 ♗d7 (Short-Neelotpal, Dhaka 1999).

The move in the game allows White to defend his e5-pawn, bring back his queen and pick up the c3-pawn, with his knight not at e2, but at g5, which is obviously more promising. But, on the other hand, the white king, having moved to d1, can no longer take shelter on the kingside and Black has a plan involving queenside castling and the rapid opening up of the centre.

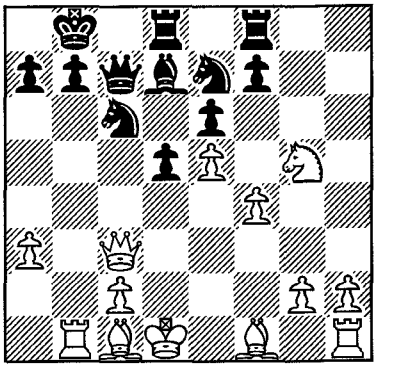
13 f4 ♗d7 14 ♕d3

Little is promised by 14 ♗d3 ♕b6 (O'Kelly-Pietzsch, Havana 1965). At the board Korchnoi thought that 14 ♖b1 would have been more unpleasant for him; to this they later replied 14...♘a5 (Pietrusiak-Uhlmann, Halle Zonal 1967).

14...0-0-0 (not 14...♘d8?! or 14...d4?! on account of 15 ♘h7) **15 ♕xc3 ♔b8**

The immediate 15...d4!? 16 ♕c5 ♘d5 and ...f7-f6 was perhaps better.

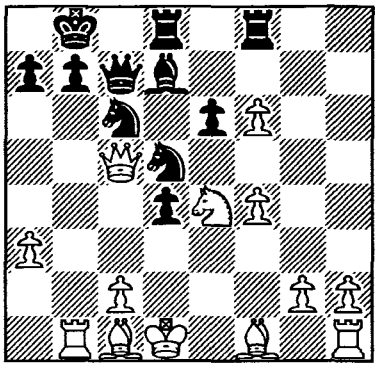
16 ♖b1 (16 a4!? Korchnoi)



16...d4 17 ♕c5 ♘d5 18 ♘e4?!

'Now Black has roughly equal chances. 18 ♗d2 should have been played.' (Korchnoi). White would have been threatening to play ♔c1 and ♗d3 and to begin the conversion of his extra pawn. And if 18...f6, then 19 ♘h7 (with gain of tempo!) 19...♖f7 20 ♘xf6 ♘xf6 21 exf6 ♖xf6 22 g4!? e5 (after 22...♖xf4? there is the dagger-blow 23 ♗a6!) 23 f5 etc.

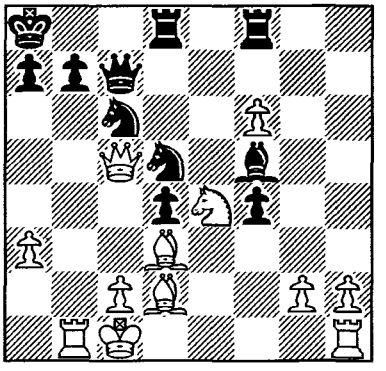
18...f6 (successfully carrying out his plan) **19 exf6**



19...e5! (not wasting time on 19...♘xf6) **20 ♗d2**

'The only defence against the threat of ...♗f5.' (Korchnoi). 20 ♗a6 b6 would not have changed anything. White's position in the centre begins to 'crumble' slightly: it is hard for his king to find a secure shelter.

20...♗f5 21 ♗d3 exf4 22 ♔c1 ♔a8



23 ♖e1?

An imperceptible, but serious inaccuracy, which loses an important tempo – the rook is firing into empty space. Both sides would still have had chances after 23 g4 (Korchnoi) with the idea of 23...♗xg4 24 ♖g1, or 23 ♖b5 ♗h7 (23...♘e3? 24 ♗a5!) 24 ♖f1, or the immediate 23 ♖f1 b6 24 ♕c4 ♘e3 25 ♗xe3 dxe3 26 ♕c3.

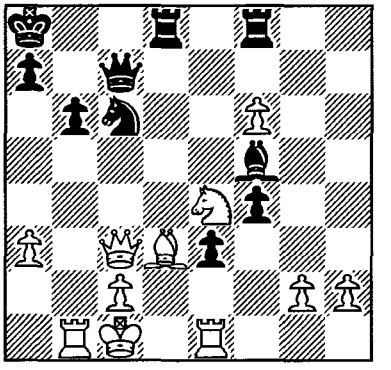
23...b6

With the intention of ...♘e3 – such a knight cannot be tolerated, but after the exchange on e3 Black acquires a powerful passed pawn. White is forced to solve some rather difficult problems.

24 ♕c4

'Minic thought that this move was the decisive mistake,' writes Korchnoi, 'but after 24 ♕b5 ♘e5 Black has a clear advantage.' And indeed, 25 ♘c5 ♘xd3+ 26 ♘xd3 ♖xf6 does not bring any relief, while if 25 ♔b2, then 25...♘e3!

24...♘e3 25 ♗xe3 dxe3 26 ♕c3



26...♕d7!

Korchnoi builds up his initiative with strong and natural moves. The tempting 26...♖fe8 would have allowed the activation of the rook – 27 ♖b4! (27 ♘c5 ♖e5! 28 ♘a6 ♕d6 is less good for White) 27...♖c8 28 ♖c4 with the idea of 28...♗e6 29 ♖xc6! ♕xc6 30 ♕xc6+ ♖xc6 31 ♗b5 ♗d5 32 ♘c3! ♗xg2 33 ♘e2 with equality. Things are also not altogether clear after 28...b5!? 29 f7! bxc4 30 fxe8♕ ♖xe8 31 ♕xc4 ♖b8 (31...♕b6 32 ♘c5!; 31...♖c8 32 ♕c3!) 32 ♘c3 ♕d6 33 ♘b5 ♕f6 34 ♕c3, aiming for the exchange of queens.

27 ♖f1

27 g3 looks more cunning, when the simple-minded 27...♖c8? runs into 28 ♘d6! ♕xd6 29 ♗xf5 with equality. But in this case Black has the good reply 27...♖fe8! 28 f7 (not 28 gxf4 ♗xe4, or 28 ♘g5 ♖e5! with the threat

of ...♖c5, and if 29 ♖b5, then 29...♗xd3 30 ♖xe5 ♘xe5 31 ♕xe5 ♖c8 and wins) 28...♖xe4 29 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 30 gxf4 ♕xf7 31 ♕xe3 ♗f5! with an irresistible attack on the king.

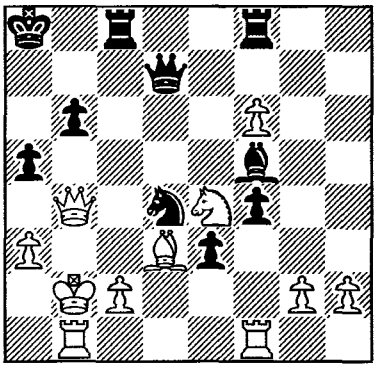
27...♖c8! 28 ♔b2 (or 28 ♖xf4 ♘e5 29 ♕xe5 ♕xd3 30 ♖b2 e2 and wins – Korchnoi)

28...♘d4

28...♕d5! was simpler, forcing 29 ♖xf4 ♘e5 30 ♕b4 ♘xd3+ 31 cxd3 ♕e5+ (not 31...♗e6?! on account of 32 ♘c3! ♕xg2+ 33 ♔a1 ♖xc3 34 ♕xf8+ ♖c8 35 ♕xc8+! ♗xc8 36 f7 ♕g7+ 37 d4 ♕f8 38 ♖g1! e2 39 ♔b2 with equality) 32 ♘c3 ♗xd3 33 ♖c1 ♖xf6 with an overwhelming advantage, or 31...♖xf6!! (threatening ...♖fc6, ...♗e6 and ...♕xd3) 32 ♘xf6 ♖c2+! 33 ♔xc2 ♕xd3+ 34 ♔b2 ♕xb1+ 35 ♔c3 ♕d3+ 36 ♔b2 ♕c2+ 37 ♔a1 ♕c1+ 38 ♔a2 ♗e6+ with crushing threats.

29 ♕b4 a5

This is also very pretty and sets White virtually insoluble problems.



30 ♕e1?

A passive move, leading to an immediate catastrophe. Far more resourcefulness would have been demanded of Black after 30 ♕e7! ♕a4 31 ♖bc1 (but not 31 ♖xf4 ♖fe8! or 31 f7 ♘b5!), for example:

1) 31... ♖fe8?! 32 ♕d6 ♖c6! (32...♖xc2+ 33 ♖xc2 ♕b3+ 34 ♔c1 ♕xd3 35 ♕d5+ ♔b8 36 ♕d6+ with perpetual check; 32...♗xe4 33 f7 ♗xd3 34 fxe8♕ ♖xe8 35 ♕d5+ ♔b8 36 cxd3 or 33...♖xc2+ 34 ♗xc2 ♕b5+ 35 ♔a1 ♘xc2+ 36 ♖xc2 ♕xf1+ 37 ♔a2 ♕b5 38 fxe8♕+ ♕xe8 39 ♖b2 is also unclear) 33 ♕d5 (33 ♕xf4? e2!) 33...♗e6 34 ♘c3! (34 f7 ♖f8!) 34...♗xd5 35 ♘xa4 ♖xf6 (35...f3 36 ♘c3 fxg2 37 f7!) 36 ♖xf4! ♖xf4 37 ♘xb6+ ♔a7 38 ♘xd5 ♖f2 39 ♖e1 with drawing chances;

2) 31...♘b5! 32 ♖xf4 ♖fe8! 33 ♕xe8 ♕xa3+ 34 ♔b1 ♖xe8 35 ♖xf5 ♘d4, or 32 ♗xb5 ♕xb5+ 33 ♔a1 ♕a4 34 c4 (34 ♖xf4 ♖ce8 35 ♕d6 ♗xe4 36 f7 ♖c8 and wins) 34...♖ce8 35 ♘c3 ♕c6 36 ♕g7 ♕xc4 with a winning attack.

30...♘xc2! (30...♖xc2+! 31 ♗xc2 ♕b5+ 32 ♔c1 ♘e2+ would also have been decisive) **31 ♗xc2 ♕b5+ 32 ♗b3 ♗xe4 0-1**

It stands to reason that after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 Korchnoi has regularly faced not only 3 ♘c3 (about two hundred times), but also 3 ♘d2 (about a hundred times). After this he has tried both 3...♘c6 and 3...♘f6, but most often he has played 3...c5 and incurred an isolated d5-pawn. In the following classic game he convincingly demonstrates Black's main trump in such positions – active piece play, even without the queens.

Game 15

A.Matanovic-V.Korchnoi

Wijk aan Zee 1968, 2nd round

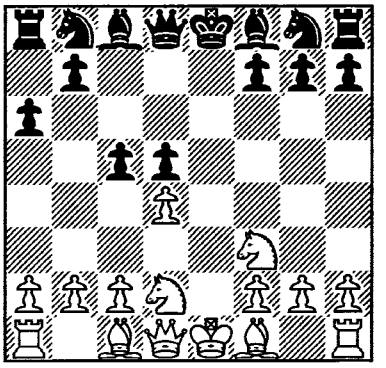
French Defence C08

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♘gf3

5 ♗b5+ ♗d7 has also occurred over 20 times in Korchnoi's games – for example, in the 16th and 22nd games of his match with Karpov (Baguio 1978).

5...a6

Sometimes Korchnoi replied 5...♘f6 or 5...c4, but mainly 5...♘c6 6 ♗b5 ♗d6 (plus the experimental 6...cxd4 7 ♕e2+ ♕e7 or 6...♕e7+) 7 0-0 ♘ge7 8 dxc5 ♗xc5 9 ♘b3 ♗d6 (the first match with Karpov, Moscow 1974) or 9...♗b6 – against Anand (London rapidplay 1994) and McShane (Reykjavik 2003). An entire epoch!



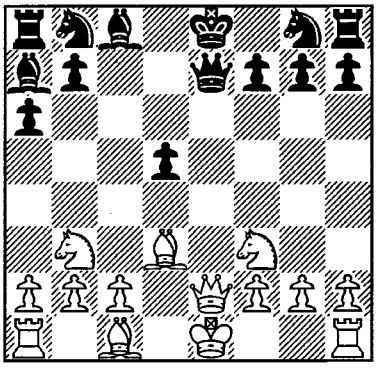
6 dxc5 (Geller and Tal preferred 6 ♗e2!) **6...♗xc5 7 ♘b3 ♗a7! 8 ♗d3**

We should also mention 8 ♗g5 ♘e7 9 ♕e2 ♘bc6 10 0-0-0 0-0 11 ♕d2 ♗f5 12 ♘fd4 ♘xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♖c8 15 ♗d3 f6 (Stein-Korchnoi, Moscow 1967), or 8 ♗e2 ♘f6 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♗g5 0-0 11 c3 ♖e8 12 ♘bd4 ♕d6 (Estevez-Korchnoi, Leningrad Interzonal 1973), in each case with equality.

8...♕e7+!

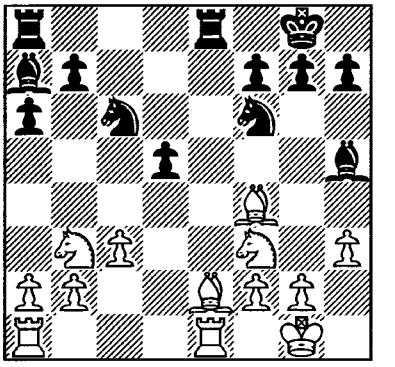
This was played back in 1950 by László Szabó. 'Here I think that Matanovic was genuinely surprised: it is hard to believe that Black, with an isolated d5-pawn, is himself offering the exchange of queens...' (Korchnoi). Especially since a previous duel between the same opponents (Havana Olympiad 1966) went 8...♘c6 9 0-0 with a slight advantage for White.

9 ♕e2



Or 9 ♗e2 ♘f6 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♘fd4 (11 ♗g5!? Keres) 11...♘c6 12 ♖e1 ♘e4 13 ♗e3 ♘e5 14 ♘d2 f5 with equality (Ciric-Korchnoi, Yugoslavia-USSR match, Budva 1967).

9...♘c6 10 0-0 ♗g4 11 h3 ♗h5 12 ♗f4 ♕xe2 13 ♗xe2 ♘f6 14 c3 0-0 15 ♖fe1 ♖fe8

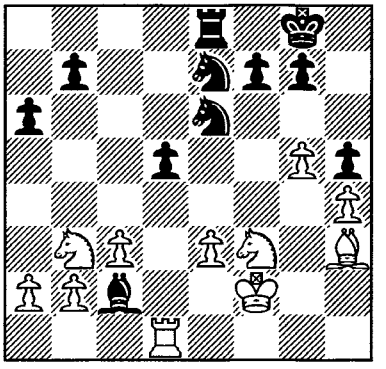


'It stands to reason that White does not stand worse. But the d5-pawn as though hypnotises Matanovic. After all, in the endgame this is a weakness, a convenient target! And he, thinking that he has an advantage, looks for ways to convert it. Meanwhile, Black does not experience any difficulties. His pieces are harmoniously and actively placed, aimed at the central squares. In such a situation the d5-pawn is not a weakness, but a strength!' (Korchnoi)

16 g4?!

'And here is the consequence of White overestimating his chances. Matanovic wants to switch his light-squared bishop to g2, but in so doing he weakens his kingside pawns – subsequently it will be this factor that leads to his defeat,' writes Korchnoi, adding that after 16 ♗f1 he would probably have played 16...♖e4. Although 16...♗xf3 17 gxf3 d4 is simpler, with equality.

16...♗g6 17 ♗f1 ♖e4 18 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♗g2 h5! 20 g5 ♘d7 21 ♖d1 ♘f8 22 ♗e3 (exchanging the strong bishop at a7) **22...♗xe3 23 fxe3 ♘e6 24 h4 ♖e8 25 ♔f2 ♘e7 26 ♗h3 ♗c2**



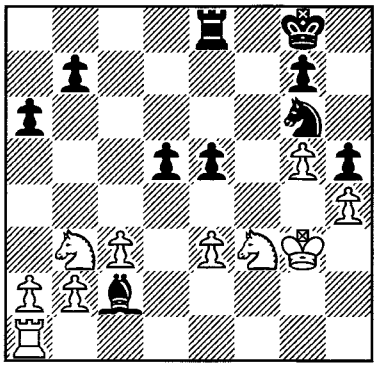
27 ♖a1

Korchnoi thought this was the only defence: 'after any other rook move' – say, 27 ♖f1!? – 'there would have followed 27...♗xb3 28 axb3 ♘c5.' However, 29 ♘e5 would have given White sufficient play: 29...♘xb3 30 ♔e2! ♘c5 31 ♘xf7, or 29...♘f5 30 ♗xf5 ♖xe5 31 ♗c2 ♘e4+ 32 ♔g2 ♔f8 33 ♖f4 ♔e7 34 ♔f3.

27...♘g6 28 ♗xe6?

A fundamental mistake, ridding Black of his isolated pawn. 28 ♘bd4 ♗e4 29 ♖d1 was correct, still maintaining approximate equality.

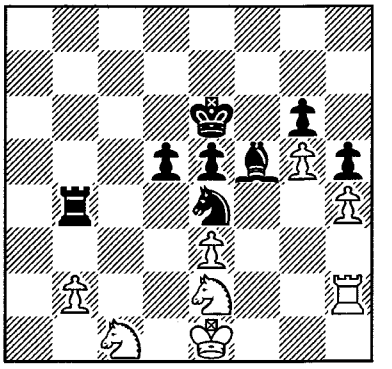
28...fxe6 29 ♔g3 (after 29 ♘c5 ♗f5 it is bad to play 30 ♘xb7? ♖b8, while if 30 ♔g3, then simply 30...♖e7) **29...e5**



30 ♘bd2?!

30 ♘c5 offered better chances of a draw.

30...♘e7 31 ♖e1 ♘f5+ 32 ♔h3 ♘d6 33 ♔g2 ♔f7 34 ♘f1 ♔e6 35 ♘g3 g6 36 ♘d2 ♖f8 37 ♖e2 b5 38 ♖f2 ♗f5 39 ♔f1 ♖c8 40 ♔e1 a5 41 a3 b4 42 axb4 axb4 43 ♘e2 ♖a8 44 ♘b3 ♘e4 45 ♖h2 ♖b8 46 cxb4 ♖xb4 47 ♘bc1



47...♘d6

'This entire stage of the game is of a technical nature. White's position is lost: he is unable to defend his pawn weaknesses.' (Korchnoi)

48 b3 (48 ♘c3 ♘c4) **48...♘e4 49 ♘g1 ♘c5 50 ♔d1 ♘xb3**, and White resigned on the 66th move (**0-1**). Korchnoi called this the best of the numerous games played by him in the given variation.

Belief in the solidity of 'French' positions with an isolated d5-pawn is a recurrent theme throughout Korchnoi's career. To some extent he was following the principle of Bronstein, formulated back in the match with Botvinnik (1951): with accurate play the 'isolani' can be held! Indeed, Korchnoi did not lose a single 'French' in his matches with Karpov (1974 and 1978). But objectively it must be said that at times he had to engage in a lengthy and stubborn defence in rather dubious positions. In the chapter on Karpov we will see how subtly the latter handled them for White (*Game Nos.52 and 53*).

Scheveningen Experiences

Korchnoi began the next world championship cycle with the Zonal, 34th USSR Championship (Tbilisi 1966/67). On this occasion he stuck to a purely rational tournament strategy,

aiming for one of the four qualifying places. But, despite being undefeated, he did not immediately achieve this objective: 1. Stein – 13 out of 20; 2. Geller – 12½; 3-5. Gipslis, Korchnoi and Taimanov – 12, etc.

To sift out the 'superfluous fifth' an additional double-round match-tournament of three players had to be held (Tallinn 1967). That was a difficult test! Taimanov drew all four of his games, while Korchnoi and Gipslis beat each other, as a result of which all three scored 2 out of 4. The fifth turned out to be Taimanov, who had an inferior coefficient in the main tournament.

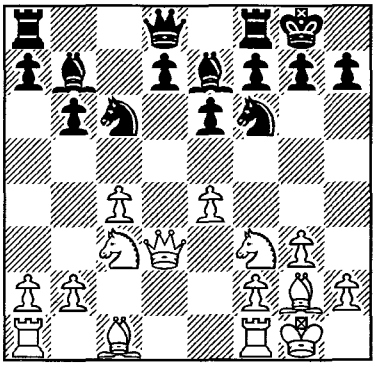
However, it could all have turned out differently, since Korchnoi won against Gipslis literally by a miracle. My attention was also drawn to the opening stage of this dramatic game.

Game 16
V.Korchnoi-A.Gipslis
Match-tournament, Tallinn 1967
English Opening A30

1 c4

Playing White, Korchnoi always preferred the closed games, and he normally opened 1 e4 only as an experiment and when he had made purposeful preparations for a specific opponent.

1...c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 e6 4 g3 b6 5 ♗g2 ♗b7 6 0-0 ♗e7 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♕xd4 0-0 9 e4 ♘c6 10 ♕d3



10...d5

'Essential, as otherwise Black would have ended up in a cramped position,' wrote Korchnoi soon after the game, but in 1995 he added: 'Dozens of present-day players are ready to make a laughing-stock of me for this phrase. Nevertheless, 30 years ago and earlier, masters (whose understanding of chess was hardly inferior to that of modern masters) presented things as follows: "The side who is cramped has difficulty manoeuvring his pieces." But the founders of the "hedgehog" set-up – which is a fully viable participant in present-day events – modified the formula: "The side who has occupied space has problems with the defence of his outposts." In the case of the "hedgehog" – with the defence of the c4- and e4-pawns. On occasions I too have played the "hedgehog" – when I have been desperate to win as Black. But in principle both Gipslis and I are players with a classical approach to chess strategy, and we don't recognise hedgehog insidiousness!' (For more details about the 'hedgehog', see the next volume.)

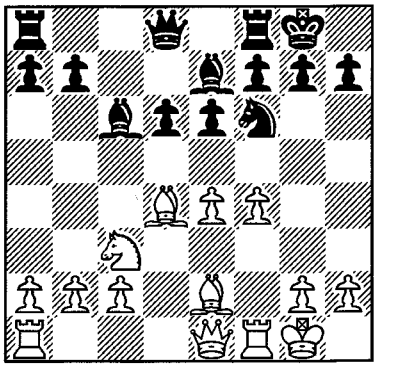
11 e5?! ♘d7! 12 cxd5 ♘b4 13 ♕e4?! ♘xd5, and by the 30th move a minor piece ending arose with an extra pawn and winning chances for Gipslis, but in a wild time scramble he did not manage to make his 40th move, the last one before the time control! Regarding this, Korchnoi commented: 'I do not like the formulae, often used by commentators – "crucial game", "war of nerves", "mass of mistakes" – but it is hard to explain otherwise this theatrical parade of minor errors and vexing mistakes, concluding in suicide, or rather – losing on time.'

Very soon Korchnoi brilliantly demonstrated that he had rightfully qualified for the Interzonal tournament. In May 1967, in honour of the 50th anniversary of the October Revolution, the USSR simultaneously staged two major international tournaments – a superstar event in Moscow (won by Stein) and a

more modest one in Leningrad. Of course, Viktor Lvovich had every right to play in Moscow, but to 'strengthen the field' they obliged him to play in Leningrad. The effect was impressive: 1. Korchnoi – 13 out of 16 (+10=6); 2. Kholmov – 12; 3-4. Barcza and Taimanov – 10½, etc.

'Korchnoi's score is exceptionally high, but for him this is by no means a rarity,' wrote V.Osnos and P.Kondratiev in the Riga magazine *Shakhmaty*. 'It is well known that competitive form, on which so much depends, cannot remain constant for long. And it has sometimes happened that the outstanding Leningrad grandmaster's greatest successes have been achieved, so to speak, at the "wrong" time. And at the most important moments, i.e. the FIDE qualifying events, he has been "in a recession". Thus in the 34th USSR Championship and the subsequent play-off his performance was only "satisfactory". But in Leningrad Korchnoi's play improved from one round to the next. It is to be hoped that this tendency will prove enduring, and that he will arrive for the forthcoming Interzonal tournament in good form... Korchnoi has always been faithful to his unusual, inimitable style. A classic example of his creative credo when playing Black (at first defence, if possible with the acquisition of material, and then counter-attack) is provided by his game with Suetin.'

The account of this game requires a short introduction. Whereas Korchnoi's contribution to the theory of the French Defence and the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez is well known, many players, especially the young, do not have the slightest suspicion that he was responsible for some important developments in the Scheveningen Variation of the Sicilian Defence. Against Kholmov (Moscow Zonal 1964) after **1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗e2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♗e3 ♘c6 9 f4** he employed what has long since become a classic plan for the first time – **9...♗d7 10 ♕e1 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗c6**.



After **12 ♕g3** Black made the key move **12...g6**. Such a kingside weakening seems inadmissible, but Korchnoi established that it is hard for White to exploit and that Black has sufficient time to set up counterplay on the queenside. In addition, White has a weak pawn at e4 (or, if it should advance, at e5).

Kholmov chose the solid but passive 13 ♕e3, and after 13...♕a5 14 e5 dxe5 15 fxe5 ♘d7 16 ♖ad1 ♗c5 17 ♗xc5 ♕xc5 18 ♕xc5 ♘xc5 19 ♗f3 ♖ac8 20 ♖d4 ♖fd8 21 ♖f4 ♗e8 White had a slightly inferior endgame, but by resourceful defence he managed to save the game. Soon another attempt was made, but it too did not bear fruit: 16 ♘e4?! ♘xe5 17 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 18 ♖xf6 ♘d7! 19 ♖f2 e5 20 ♗c3 ♕b6 21 ♕xb6 axb6... 0-1 (Parma-Spassky, Belgrade 1964).

Black also has a good game after 13 ♗f3 b5! 14 a3 a5 15 ♖ad1 b4 16 axb4 axb4 17 e5 (this merely leads to simplification) 17...♗xf3 18 ♕xf3 bxc3 19 exf6 ♗xf6 20 ♕xc3 ♗xd4+ 21 ♕xd4 ♖a6 22 ♖f3 ♕a8 23 b4 ♖c6 24 ♖a1?! (24 c3 d5 25 f5 ♖c4 26 ♕d2 would have maintained a roughly equal heavy piece middlegame: White has a passed pawn on the queenside, but his king's shelter is weakened) 24...♕b8 25 c3 ♖fc8 26 h4?! h5 27 ♕f6 ♕c7 28 ♖a3 d5 29 ♔h2 ♖c4 30 b5? (but this is a blunder) 30...♖b8 31 ♖f2 ♖xb5... 0-1 (Milic-Korchnoi, Belgrade 1964).

Then **12 ♗d3** appeared. Korchnoi's reaction was as risky as it was original: 12...a6

(12...♘d7! 13 ♕g3 e5 with equality) 13 ♔h1 b5 14 a3 ♕d7?! (14...♘d7!) 15 ♖f3 ♘h5!? 16 ♕e3 f5! 17 ♖h3?! (17 ♖f1) 17...♘f6 18 exf5 exf5 19 ♖e1 ♖ae8 20 ♕d2 ♘g4! 21 ♗e2 ♗f6, and after 'truly dubious play' Black nevertheless obtained a reasonable position and even chances of seizing the initiative, and in the end he won on the 58th move (Matanovic-Korchnoi, Hamburg 1965).

Only 16 f5! ♗f6 17 ♕f2 (Korchnoi) could have disclosed the drawbacks of his set-up. In similar structures the f4-f5 breakthrough became typical. A vivid example is Karpov-Hübner (Bad Kissingen 1980).

I remember my first 'Scheveningen' lessons, given in the Baku Pioneers Palace by Oleg Privorotsky. It was these games that he showed me: at that time everyone was brought up on the games of the strongest Soviet players of the 1950s and 1960s. Oleg Isaakovich taught us: 'As Korchnoi has shown, after 9...♗d7 10 ♕e1 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♗c6 Black has nothing to fear, so therefore White should play 10 ♘b3!' However, other ways of deviating also occurred, and one of them was demonstrated by Suetin.

Game 17
A.Suetin-V.Korchnoi
Leningrad 1967, 12th round
Sicilian Defence B83

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 d6

This, in Korchnoi's opinion, is the 'most accurate move order for Black, if he is intending to play the "Scheveningen": in this way he avoids both the Keres Attack 6 g4, and the Rauzer Variation 6 ♗g5.'

6 ♗e3 ♘f6 7 ♗e2 ♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♕d2!? (White avoids 9 0-0 ♗d7 – see above)

9...♘xd4

Now if 9...♗d7 there is the unpleasant 10 ♘db5, although the natural defender was also prepared to defend this cramped position: 10...d5 11 e5 ♘e8 12 0-0 g6 13 ♘d4 ♘g7 etc. (Liberzon-Korchnoi, 38th USSR Championship, Riga 1970).

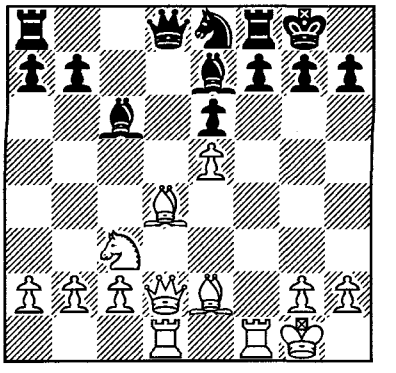
The game Sakharov-Krogius (32nd USSR Championship, Kiev 1964/65), where the plan with 9 ♕d2 originated, went 9...a6 10 0-0-0 ♕c7 11 g4! with the initiative for White, which in principle was confirmed by subsequent practice. Towards the end of the century 10...♘d7 11 g4 ♘xd4 became popular. And yet the best method of equalising is considered to be the immediate counter in the centre 9...e5! (Kupreichik-Kasparov, Kislovodsk 1982).

10 ♗xd4 ♗d7 11 e5 (otherwise 11...♗c6, and the knight is not forced to retreat to e8)

11...dxe5 12 fxe5 ♘e8 13 0-0

'A quieter continuation than the double-edged 13 0-0-0. The absence of direct pressure on the e5-pawn gives White the advantage.' (Osnos, Kondratiev). But if Black should manage to solve the problem of his 'bad' knight at e8, this advantage will evaporate.

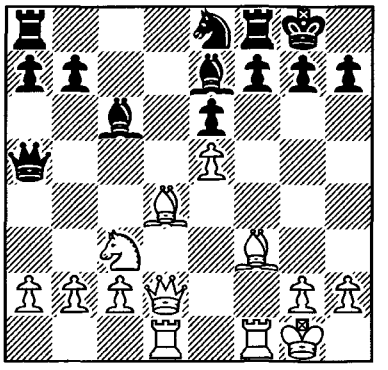
13...♗c6 14 ♖ad1



14...♕a5! (instead of the cheerless 14...♘c7, Black creates the threat of ...♖d8xd4 and ...♗c5) **15 ♗f3**

15 a3 looks attractive, with the idea of 15...♖d8 16 ♕e3 ♖xd4?! (16...b6 17 ♔h1!) 17 ♖xd4 ♗c5 18 b4! ♗xd4 19 ♕xd4 ♕xa3 20 b5 ♗d5 (20...♗d7 21 ♘e4 and ♖a1) 21 ♘xd5 exd5 22 ♖a1 ♕e7 23 ♖xa7 etc. However, here 15...♘c7! is correct, and after 16 b4 (16 ♕e3 ♘d5) 16...♕xa3 17 b5 Black is saved by

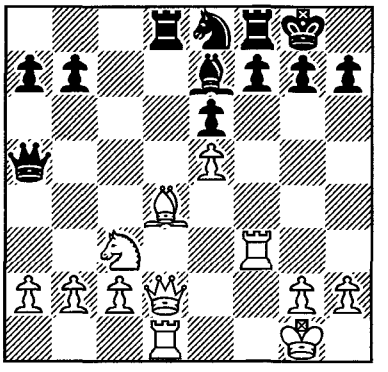
17...♖ad8! 18 ♘b1 ♖xd4 19 ♕xd4 ♕a5 20 c4 a6!



15...♗xf3

'A significant inaccuracy. By 15...♖d8 (with the threat of ...♖xd4 and ...♗c5) Black could have won an important tempo for regrouping.' (Osnos, Kondratiev). For example: 16 ♕e3 ♗xf3 17 ♖xf3 ♘c7, rapidly equalising. But Korchnoi is eager for more!

16 ♖xf3 ♖d8



17 ♔h1 (17 ♕f2!?) **17...♘c7**

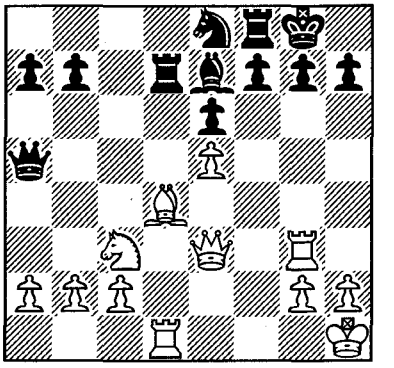
'Now if 17...♗c5, then 18 ♖d3 is possible.' (Osnos, Kondratiev). And after 18...♗xd4 19 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 20 ♕xd4 ♘c7 21 a4 White has some advantage and, most important – an easy game.

18 ♖g3 ♖d7!?

It appears that Black is taking a deliberate risk, provoking the enemy fire. 18...f6 19 exf6 (19 ♕h6 ♖f7) 19...♗xf6 20 ♖d3 ♗xd4 21 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 22 ♕xd4 ♕f5 would have equalised, but White could have forced a draw by 20 ♗xf6 ♖xd2 21 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 22 ♖f7+ ♔g8 23 ♖g7+.

19 ♕h6 ♘e8 (alas...) **20 ♕e3**

The e5-pawn and the bishop at d4 paralyse Black's position, and if the white knight should move from c3 to e4 and the pawn from c2 to c3, he will be left totally without counterplay.



20...h5!

'As always, Korchnoi confronts his opponents with the greatest obstacles.' (Osnos, Kondratiev). An uncommonly paradoxical defence: at that time it was somehow not considered acceptable to make such pawn moves away from the king. But Black wants finally to bring his knight into play by ...g7-g6 and ...♘g7-f5, and White will not have the typical restricting move g2-g4.

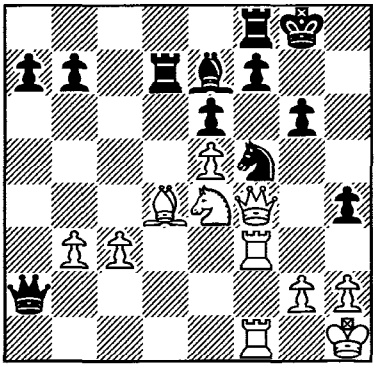
With this same aim 20...g6 was not bad – 21 ♖h3 h5 and ...♘g7 for example, but then White could have nailed down the pawn at h7 by 21 ♕h6, although after 21...f6 (21...♘g7?! is hardly acceptable: 22 ♖h3 ♘h5 23 ♖dd3! ♖xd4 24 ♖xd4 ♕xe5 25 ♕d2) 22 ♖h3 ♖f7 it is hard for him to count on any real advantage.

The further course of the game shows that Korchnoi's choice was correct. Suetin spent a lot of time, but he was unable to create any serious threats on the kingside, weakened by the advance of the h-pawn, and Black gained

sufficient counterplay. True, he always had to remember that the absence of the pawn from h7, together with the weakened f6-square, which the white knight was eagerly eyeing, was a potential source of problems, and after the slightest error these problems could become insoluble.

21 ♖f1 (21 ♕e2!? and ♖gd3) **21...♕b4 22 ♘e2 ♕c4 23 c3 g6 24 ♖gf3 ♘g7 25 b3 ♕a6 26 ♘g3 h4 27 ♘e4 ♘f5 28 ♕f4 ♕xa2**

'Only when the knight has become established at f5, where it covers the immediate approaches to its king, does Black venture to take the a2-pawn.' (Osnos, Kondratiev)



29 ♗c5

'A tempting move, but it does not promise White more than a draw. 29 g4 hxg3 30 hxg3 ♔g7 31 g4 ♖h8+ *(31...♘xd4 32 ♖h3! – G.K.)* 32 ♔g1 ♖h4 would have led to complicated and unclear play.' (Osnos, Kondratiev). But this is refuted by the simple 33 ♗f2. And if 32...♖xd4 33 cxd4 ♖h4, then 34 gxf5! ♖xf4 35 f6+ ♗xf6 36 exf6+ ♔g8 37 ♖xf4 ♕xb3 38 ♖h4!, when the threat of ♖f2-h2 and ♖h8 mate can hardly be parried.

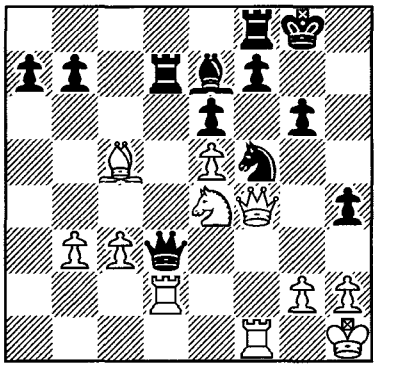
However, instead of 30...♔g7? or, say, 30...♕xb3? 31 g4 ♘xd4 (other moves also do not save Black) 32 ♕h6! and ♘f6+ with mate, Black has a good choice between 30...♕e2! and 30...♘xd4 31 cxd4 ♕c2!, when in both cases White's attack comes to a standstill.

29...♕e2

A solid, reliable move: the queen returns to the heart of events. It would appear that Black's defensive potential is so great that he could have parried the attack even in the event of the extremely risky 29...♕xb3 30 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 31 ♖h3 ♔g7, for example: 32 ♖xh4 ♖d7 33 ♕g5 ♘xh4 34 ♕f6+ ♔g8 35 ♕xh4 ♔g7, or 32 g4! hxg3 33 hxg3 ♖h8 (33...♕d5 34 g4) 34 ♖xh8 ♔xh8 35 g4 ♔g7! 36 gxf5 exf5 with full compensation for the piece (it is unlikely that there is anything better than 37 ♘f6 ♕xc3 38 ♘h5+ ♔g6 39 ♘f6+ with perpetual check).

30 ♖3f2 ♕d3 31 ♖f3 (or 31 ♗xe7 ♖xe7 32 ♖d2 ♕e3 with equality) **31...♕e2 32 ♖3f2 ♕d3** (a draw by repetition?) **33 ♖d2?!**

'As often happens, the attacking side overestimates his chances.' (Osnos, Kondratiev). I would add: in an acute time scramble!



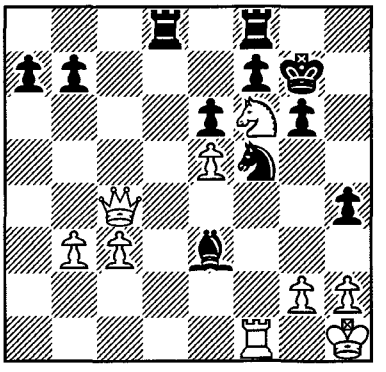
33...♕xd2! 34 ♘xd2 ♗xc5 (the rook, bishop and pawn are excellent compensation for the queen) **35 ♘e4 ♗e3 36 ♘f6+?!**

'Suddenly finding himself in the role of defender, Suetin acts extremely uncertainly. 36 ♕f3 was essential, with the threat of ♘f6+, and if 36...♔g7 37 ♘d6 with good drawing chances.' (Osnos, Kondratiev)

36...♔g7 37 ♕c4 (37 ♘xd7? ♗xf4 38 ♘xf8 ♗xe5 39 ♘d7 ♗xc3 and wins) **37...♖dd8**

With the idea of ...♖h8! The h-pawn looked to be a weakness, but it has proved to be a strength, since it prevents White from freeing his king by g2-g3. And since his king is in con-

stant danger, it is hard for him to create any effective counterplay.



38 ♘g4 ♗b6 39 ♘f2? (a fatal mistake with his flag about to fall, although after 39 ♕e2 ♖h8 with the threat of ...♘g3+ Black's position is still better: 40 ♘f2 ♖h5 etc.) **39...♗xf2 40 ♖xf2 ♘e3 0-1**

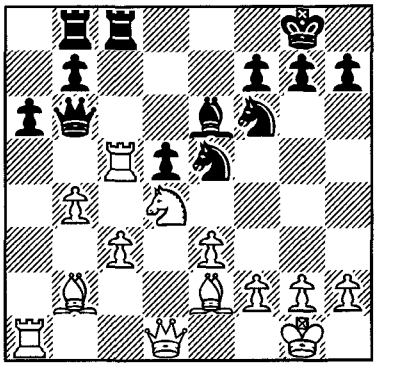
The Interzonal tournament in Sousse (autumn 1967) was one of the most interesting chess events of those years, and not only because of the excellent start and sensational exit from the tournament of Bobby Fischer. The battle for the six qualifying places in the Candidates matches was incredibly dramatic. Korchnoi was aiming only to qualify, alternating draws with occasional wins – over Kavalek, Byrne, Larsen... But after losing in the 15th and 17th rounds to Ivkov and Matulovic, he slipped down to 'plus two' and appeared to have lost any chance of success. However, five successive wins, including one over Portisch (who was 1½ points ahead), helped him to repair the situation: 1. Larsen – 15½ out of 21; 2-4. Geller, Gligoric and Korchnoi – 14; 5. Portisch – 13½; 6-8. Hort, Reshevsky and Stein – 13, etc.

Soon afterwards, now among the ranks of the Candidates, he gained the first, and probably the most staggering of his four victories in Wijk aan Zee (January 1968): 1. Korchnoi – 12 out of 15; 2-4. Hort, Portisch and Tal – 9; 5. Gheorghiu – 8½; 6-7. Ciric and Matanovic – 8, etc. His start – 8 out of 8, then 10½ out of 11 (4 points ahead of his nearest rivals) – could have been the envy of Fischer himself! As the Moscow weekly *64* reported, at that time a letter arrived in Belgrade from grandmaster Trifunovic: 'Such a superiority frightens even me, an old tournament fox. Is it possible that everyone, apart from Korchnoi, has forgotten how to play chess?'

And this is what the European press wrote: 'Many times earlier we have witnessed brilliant victories by Korchnoi. It can be said with certainty: when Korchnoi plays abroad, he always finishes first... His triumph in Wijk aan Zee is comparable with Alekhine's achievement in San Remo (1930).' Apart from anything else, this was the fruit of enormous labour: Korchnoi made 607 moves in the tournament – more than any other contestant (thus Gheorghiu made do with 345).

Few were surprised to see him gain another win over Tal. But, in my opinion, it is worth noting Korchnoi's self-critical attitude in his evaluation of the turning point of this game.

Game 18
V.Korchnoi-M.Tal
Wijk aan Zee 1968, 8th round



19 ♘xe6?! fxe6?

'White made this exchange, since he did not see any way to strengthen his position. But the exchange too should not have brought him

any particular benefits. After 19...♕xe6 White could hardly count on an advantage: his bishops have no scope,' wrote Korchnoi in 1968, but in 1995 he firmly added: '27 years after the conclusion of the game I should be more frank: in the event of 19...♕xe6, in view of the terrible position of the bishop at b2, White's position is close to being lost.'

20 c4! (Tal had overlooked this) **20...♘xc4**

The computer prefers 20...♖xc5 21 ♗xe5 ♖cc8, but according to Korchnoi after 22 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 23 ♕b3 'White has an obvious positional advantage.' The light-squared bishop against a knight – Fischer's favourite combination...

21 ♗xf6 gxf6 22 ♗xc4 dxc4 23 ♕g4+ ♔h8 24 ♕d4 (24 ♕xc4!?) **24...♕d8 25 ♕xc4 ♖xc5 26 bxc5 ♕d7?!** (26...♕d5 was more tenacious – Korchnoi) **27 ♕f4**, and Black resigned on the 59th move (**1-0**).

Also interesting is Korchnoi's comment on his game with Ciric (10th round), after **1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 ♗g5 ♗e7 5 e3 0-0 6 ♖c1!? h6 7 ♗h4 b6 8 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 g3**: 'I don't know whether this position had occurred earlier, but Ciric considers the move 10 g3 and the plan associated with it to be my invention. Later I several times employed the variation with 6 ♖c1, which proved to be very strong against the Tartakower-Makogonov-Bondarevsky Defence. For the match in Merano (1981), instead of 7...b6 Karpov "with his comrades" prepared the strong move 7...dxc4!' (*Game No.84*).

That year Korchnoi finally made a spurt towards the summit, winning his Candidates matches against Reshevsky (5½-2½) and Tal (5½-4½). But then he lost to Spassky (3½-6½) and, having effectively become the No.3 player in the world, he gained the right to participate in the next cycle without having to qualify. All these encounters were annotated in detail by the participants themselves in a splendid book, published in Belgrade in 1969. After his defeat in the final, Viktor Lvovich admitted that his opponent had played more strongly, particularly in the middlegame, and with his customary objectivity he explained:

'For every opponent Spassky selects that weapon which is not to the player's taste. I think that when preparing for our match he outlined the type of battle needed, in order to impose the most unpleasant manner of play on me. For this it was sufficient for him to look through a dozen games of mine against players with a waiting style and to sense how uncertainly I play against them. Indeed, I did not once succeed in genuinely breaching Spassky's defence.' (cf. also the start of the chapter 'The Storming of Olympus' in Volume 3).

During the two and a half years till the next Candidates matches, Korchnoi achieved a whole series of top-class results: at the end of 1968 he won a super-tournament in Mallorca (+10=6, ahead of Spassky, Larsen and Petrosian); in 1969 he won a further three international tournaments, and in Mallorca he shared 3rd-4th places; in 1970 he distinguished himself in Rovinj/Zagreb (a share of 2nd-6th places with Fischer) and in the 38th USSR Championship in Riga, where he very confidently won his fourth gold medal (+12–1=8). And he began 1971 with another victory in Wijk aan Zee.

His present-day evaluations of his own comments on the games of that period are, as usual, sharp and self-critical. For example, on his game with Hübner (Wijk aan Zee 1971): 'These notes are more like a conversation with a journalist than a serious piece of work, but the game is interesting.' Or his win over Spassky (Palma de Mallorca 1968) – at the time after his 20th move he wrote: 'Although White's position is better, Black maintains the balance. After 20...d5 21 cxd5 cxd5 22 e5 there are few real chances of winning.' But now he frankly admitted: 'A weak commentary – from beginning to end. The first sentence is meaningless: what is the real state of

affairs – is White better or is the position balanced?! But in the given variation, thanks to the weakness of Black's queenside pawns, White stands better.'

Korchnoi's opponent in the 1971 Candidates quarter-final match was the highly experienced Efim Geller (cf. the chapter 'Petrovich – threat to the champions' in Volume 2). In the first game he employed his favourite King's Indian Defence, but against Korchnoi this was not the best choice. Geller's position became increasingly difficult, he got into severe time-trouble, and on move 36 he overstepped the time limit. 'A defeat at the start is always unpleasant, since you are immediately in the position of having to catch up (this comment was made by Geller himself at the conclusion of the match). Perhaps this factor affected Geller's play, which was laboured and with long periods of thought, in nearly all the remaining games of the match,' wrote V.Osnos and G.Sosonko, the assistants of the Leningrad grandmaster.

But there was still much fight to come. In the even-numbered games Geller played only 1 e4, and Korchnoi employed only the Sicilian Defence: in the 2nd and 4th games – the Dragon Variation (not without success), and in the 6th and 8th he presented his 'Scheveningen experiences'. I should remind you that it was a match of ten games, and after his win in the 7th Korchnoi was leading 4½-2½. Thus the 8th game was practically Geller's last chance of saving the match. The nervous tension had reached its peak.

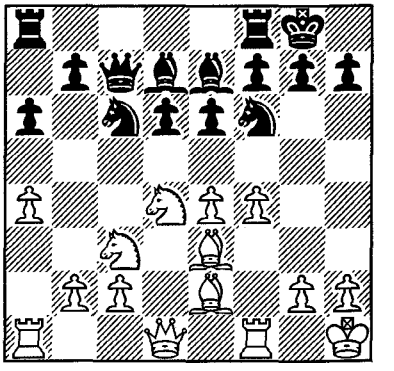
Game 19

E.Geller-V.Korchnoi

Candidates Quarter-final Match, Moscow 1971, 8th game

Sicilian Defence B85

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 (not 5...e6 6 g4, as occurred in the 6th game) **6 ♗e2 e6 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 f4 0-0 9 ♔h1 ♘c6 10 ♗e3 ♕c7 11 a4 ♗d7**



Korchnoi is true to his favourite manoeuvre, even with the inclusion of ...a7-a6. Nowadays everyone automatically makes the more accurate move 11...♖e8 – I have played this many times myself, in particular in matches for the world championship with Karpov and Anand (for details, see Volume 7).

12 ♘b3!

This retreat long ago became standard: otherwise there follows 'Korchnoi's relieving manoeuvre'...♘xd4 and ...♗c6 with equality. Now, however, White has some advantage. But – and this is hard to belief – at this point Geller had already used 1 hour 35 minutes!

12...b6 13 ♗f3

'After the flank diversion 13 g4 Black could have replied with the central counter 13...d5!' (Gufeld). Indeed, after 14 e5 ♘e4 15 ♘xe4 dxe4 he has a good game; if 16 c3 even 16...g5!? is possible.

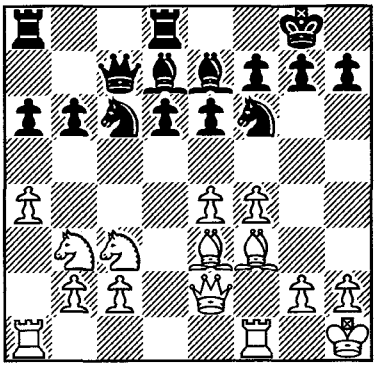
13...♖fd8

An old plan with the manoeuvre of the bishop to e8, vacating the d7-square for the knight. Nowadays Black usually retreats his bishop to c8, followed by ...♗b7 and ...♘d7, but at that time this was considered unusual.

14 ♕e2

White was intending the plan that was traditional at that time, involving the preparation of e4-e5 and a piece attack on the kingside. But the modern move 14 g4! is more energetic, giving White better chances of casting doubts on Black's defensive construction:

14...♗e8 (now after 14...d5 15 e5 Black does not have 15...♘e4, while if 15...♘e8, then 16 ♕e2) 15 g5 ♘d7 16 ♗g2 etc.

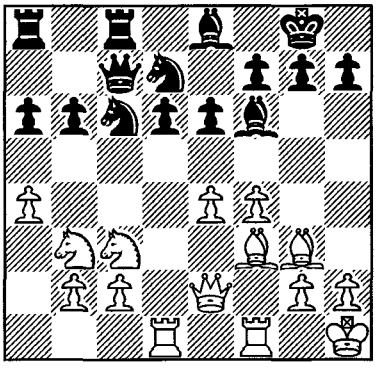


14...♗e8 15 ♗f2 ♖dc8!?

Waiting strategy. 'It took Geller a considerable amount of time to find the solution to such moves.' (Gufeld)

16 ♗g3 (16 g4!? Gufeld) **16...♘d7 17 ♖ad1** (or 17 ♘d5 exd5 18 exd5 ♗f6 19 dxc6 ♘c5 with equality – Flohr) **17...♗f6**

'This move surprised me, but if 17...♘c5 I was also intending 18 e5.' (Geller). And if 18...d5, then 19 f5! with a powerful attack, for example: 19...♘xb3 20 cxb3 ♗c5 21 fxe6 fxe6 22 ♘xd5! exd5 23 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 24 ♕f3 etc.



18 e5! dxe5 19 fxe5 ♗e7

The e5-pawn is taboo: after 19...♘dxe5 (19...♗xe5? 20 ♗xc6 is worse) 20 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 21 ♖fe1! ♕b7 22 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 23 ♕xe5 ♗xg2+ 24 ♔g1 White should convert his extra piece.

20 ♘d4

It was suggested that 20 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 21 ♘d4 would also have retained an attacking position, although here Black could have counted on equality by playing 21...♕b7! and ...♘c5.

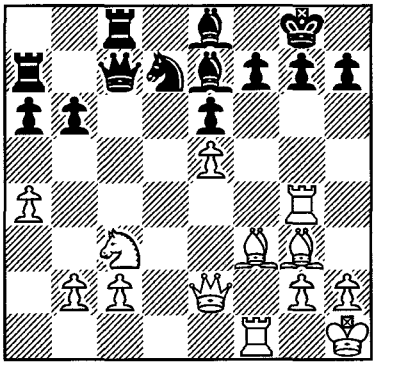
20...♘xd4 (20...♘c5 21 b4!? Gufeld) **21 ♖xd4 ♖a7 22 ♖g4!**

Heated debates flared up among the analysts regarding 22 ♘d5!? exd5 23 e6. In the opinion of Flohr, 'with this simple tactical stroke White could have opened the position to his advantage.'

As evidence the following lines were given: 23...♕c5 24 ♖xd5 ♕xc2 (after 24...♕c4 25 exd7 ♖xd7 26 ♕xc4 ♖xc4 27 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 28 ♗d5 or 25...♗xd7 26 ♕xc4 ♖xc4 27 ♖fd1 ♗e8 28 ♖5d2 ♗g5 29 ♖e1! ♖c8 30 ♖d5 ♗e7 31 a5 White has the better endgame) 25 exf7+ ♗xf7 26 ♕xe7 ♗xd5 27 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 28 ♗e5 'with a decisive attack' (Gufeld), although, in my opinion, after 28...♘f6! 29 ♕xa7 ♕e2! 30 ♖b1 ♕xe5 31 ♕xa6 ♖e8 32 ♗f3 ♕xb2! the position is a draw.

It would appear that the immediate 23...♕xc2 is also acceptable: 24 exf7+ ♗xf7 25 ♕xe7 ♕c5 26 ♕h4 ♘f6! 27 ♗f2 ♖ac7 etc.

Geller chose a continuation that was far more unpleasant for Black, but here another surprise awaited him.



22...h5!

A move that evokes memories of the game with Suetin (*Game No.17*), especially since here

Black does not have the 'bad' knight at e8. 'Such a defence is typical of Korchnoi's style in general, but here it is also objectively the best possibility, although it runs counter to a well-known axiom: don't advance pawns on the part of the board where you are weaker.' (Gufeld)

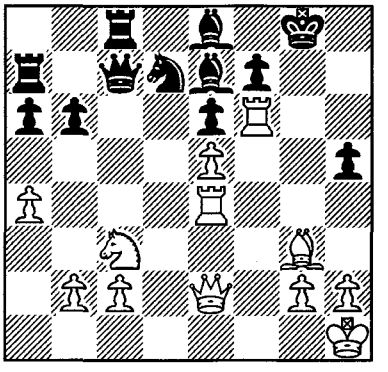
In the opinion of Flohr, a grandmaster of traditionally classical style, 'by 22...♘f8 Black would have achieved a perfectly sound position and after 23 h4 a complicated struggle would have developed.' However, here, in my view, the evaluation of Gufeld (Geller's second) is more accurate: 'In all variations White has a powerful initiative. He is threatening to intensify the pressure by h4-h5.'

23 ♖e4 g6

'After 23...h4 24 ♗f2 Black has a difficult position.' (Gufeld). Korchnoi set his opponent a difficult psychological problem (moreover, with him short of time): now White's attack must definitely be accompanied by sacrifices. And Geller sank into agonising thought...

24 h3

The commentators unanimously condemned this move and attached a question mark to it. 'It is surprising that such a splendid tactician as Geller marks time and in the end loses the battle, missing the excellent opportunity 24 ♗xh5!? gxh5 25 ♖f6!, when it would be hard even for the great Korchnoi to find a defence.' (Flohr). It is hard, but possible!



Analysis diagram

Of course, it is bad to play 25...♗xf6? 26 exf6 ♘xf6 (a forced queen sacrifice: 26...♕c5 27 ♖g4+! ♔f8 28 ♕d2 or 27...♔h8 28 ♖c4!) 27 ♗xc7 ♘xe4 28 ♗xb6 ♘xc3 29 bxc3 ♖d7 30 ♕xh5 f6 (30...♖xc3 31 ♕g4+ ♔h7 32 ♗d4) 31 ♕e2! and White should be able to convert his two extra pawns, or 25...♕d8? 26 ♕xh5 ♘f8 27 ♖h6! ♘g6 (27...f5 28 ♖h8+ ♔g7 29 ♕h6+ ♔f7 30 ♖h4! Gufeld) 28 ♖g4 ♗f6 29 exf6 ♕xf6 30 ♗f2! with an irresistible attack. Nevertheless, Black had a defence – and, it would appear, not just one:

1) 25...♕c5 (Korchnoi) 26 ♖h6!? (Gufeld's move 26 ♖g4+ does not give any advantage in view of 26...hxg4 27 ♕xg4+ ♔h7 28 ♘e4! ♘xf6! 29 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 30 exf6 ♕f8 or 29 exf6 ♗f8! 30 ♕h4+ ♔g6 31 ♘xc5 bxc5 with a draw) 26...f5! 27 exf6 ♗xf6 28 ♖xe6 ♕f8! 29 ♘d5 ♕xh6 30 ♘e7+ ♗xe7 31 ♖xh6 ♗f8 32 ♖e6 ♗f7 with sufficient compensation for the queen;

2) 25...♘f8! A typical defensive manoeuvre, creating an outpost at g6, supported by the f7-pawn and the bishop at e8: 26 ♕xh5 ♘g6 27 ♖g4 (27 ♖f3 ♕d8 28 ♗e1 f5! 29 exf6 ♗xf6 or 28...♗f8 29 ♖h3 f5! is no better for White) 27...♗xf6 28 exf6 ♕d8 29 ♗e5 ♕d2! 30 h3 ♖c5! 31 ♔h2 ♗c6 with advantage to Black, or 26 ♖h6 ♘g6 27 ♕xh5 ♗f8 28 ♖h7 ♗g7 29 ♗h4 (nothing is given by 29 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 30 ♗h4 f5! 31 exf6+ ♔g8) 29...♗xe5 30 ♗g3 ♗xg3 31 hxg3 f5!! (also a typical defence) 32 ♖xc7 ♖axc7 33 ♘d5 (there is nothing else) 33...fxe4 34 ♘xc7 ♖xc7, and it is White who has to find a draw.

It should be mentioned that, apart from the thematic 25 ♖f6!? (blockading the f7-pawn!) White also has 25 ♘d5!? (after 25 ♕xh5? f5! 26 ♕h6 ♘f8 his hopes are dashed) 25...exd5 with very interesting complications:

1) 26 ♖g4+?! (26 e6? ♕xc2 or 26...dxe4! 27 ♗xc7 ♖axc7) 26...hxg4 27 ♕xg4+ ♔f8 28 ♕h5! ♗g5! 29 e6 (after 29 ♕xg5?! there is the pretty defence 29...♕c6! 30 ♖f6 ♕xc2 31 ♕h6+ ♔g8! 32 ♕g5+ ♕g6!) 29...♘e5 30 e7+ ♔xe7 31 ♕xg5+ ♔d7 32 ♗xe5 ♕xc2 33

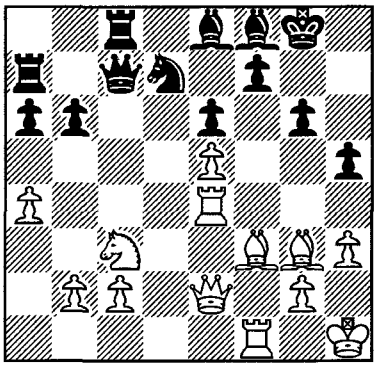
♗g3! (33 ♕g4+? ♔d8 34 ♕g5+ ♖e7 35 ♗d6 ♕e2 and wins) 33...♖c6! 34 ♗h4 ♔c8 35 ♕d8+ ♔b7 36 ♕xe8 ♖c7 37 ♗g3 ♖a8 38 ♕e5 ♖d7, and Black retains his exchange advantage and winning chances;

2) 26 ♕xh5 dxe4! 27 ♕g4+ ♔f8 28 ♕h5! ♗g5! 29 e6 (not 29 ♕xg5? ♕c6 30 ♖f6 ♕xa4 31 h3 ♖c5! or 31 ♕h6+ ♔e7 32 ♕h4 ♔d8 33 b3 ♕b4! 34 ♖xf7+ ♔c7 35 e6+ ♔c6 and wins) 29...♘e5 30 e7+! ♔g8! 31 ♕xg5+ ♘g6 32 ♗xc7 ♖cxc7 33 a5! (33 h4 ♖c5!) 33...bxa5! (now 33...♖c5? runs into 34 axb6! ♖xg5 35 bxa7 ♗c6 36 a8♕+ ♗xa8 37 e8♕+) 34 h4 ♖xe7 35 h5 ♖e5 36 ♖f5 ♖xf5 37 ♕xf5 ♖e7! 38 hxg6 e3 39 gxf7+ ♗xf7, and the strong passed pawn guarantees Black a draw: 40 ♕xa5 (40 ♕g4+ ♔f8 41 ♕e2 ♗c4!) 40...e2 41 ♕e1 ♗g6 42 c4(3) ♗d3.

Thus, after 24 ♗xh5 gxh5 there appears to be no decisive continuation of the attack for White, but for several more moves the threat of the bishop sacrifice is in the air. To take such a risk, considerable courage is demanded of the player with Black – I would say, the courage of a tightrope walker, when one false step can lead to disaster. But Korchnoi keenly sensed that his opponent was in such a nervous state, that he would find it especially difficult to take committing decisions involving material sacrifices.

24...♗f8

Another interesting moment. Geller again had much to think about.



25 ♗h2

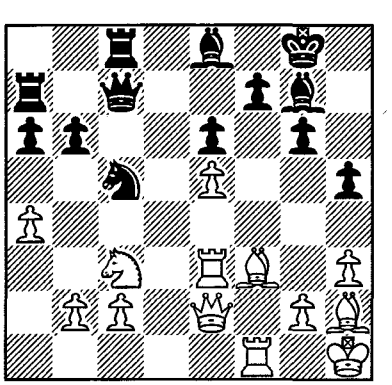
For some reason no one mentioned 25 ♗xh5!? gxh5 26 ♗h4! with the threat of ♗f6 (and if 26...♘c5?, then 27 ♖g4+!!), although this would have set Black even more difficult problems than the sacrifice on the previous move. After 26...f5 27 exf6 ♗f7 28 ♖f3 White's attack looks very dangerous. Let us also examine moves with the queen:

1) 26...♕b8 27 ♗f6 ♘xf6 28 ♖xf6 ♗g7 29 ♕xh5 ♖c5 30 ♕g5 ♔f8 31 b4! ♗xf6 (31...♖xc3? 32 ♖g4) 32 ♕xf6 ♖xc3, and although after 33 ♖h4 ♖g3 34 ♖h8+ ♖g8 35 ♕h6+ ♔e7 36 ♖xg8 ♖a8 or 33 ♔h2! ♖e3! (otherwise ♖h4) 34 ♖xe3 ♖d7 Black has a bishop for two pawns, his defence is difficult (the decisive word may be said by the passed h-pawn);

2) 26...♕c5! 27 ♖f3! ♗h6 (27...♗g7? 28 ♖g3 with the threat of ♖xg7+! and ♕xh5) 28 ♖g3+ ♔h7 29 ♗g5! ♕f8 30 ♖f4 ♖c5 31 ♘e4! (31 ♕xh5 f6!) 31...♖xe5 32 ♘f6+ ♘xf6 33 ♕xe5 ♘d5 34 ♖h4 f6 35 ♕e4+ ♗g6 36 ♗xh6 ♕xh6 37 ♕xe6 and White, having regained the material, retains the initiative.

After Geller's rejection of the piece sacrifice, Black succeeds in consolidating his position, and the battle continues at a more measured pace, without straying beyond the bounds of approximate equality.

25...♗g7 26 ♖e3 ♘c5



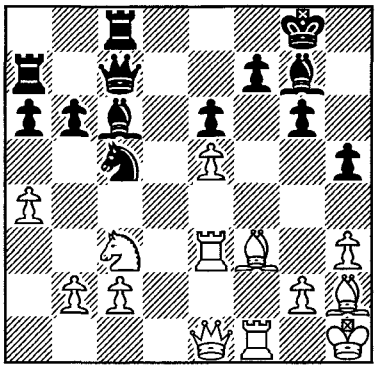
27 ♕e1

'Why does White give ground? Here too 27

♗xh5 gxh5? 28 ♖f6 would have given him an irresistible attack.' (Gufeld). However, in my opinion, the cool-headed 28...♘d7! 29 ♕xh5 ♘f8 and ...♘g6 (a familiar manoeuvre!) parries the attack, and therefore 28 ♖g3! is stronger, for example: 28...♔f8 29 ♖g5! ♕c6 (29...♘xa4 is also insufficient – 30 ♕xh5) 30 ♖xg7! ♔xg7 31 ♕xh5 ♖d7 32 ♕g5+ ♔f8 33 ♕h6+ ♔g8 34 ♖f4, or 33...♔e7 34 ♕f6+ ♔f8 35 ♗f4, mating.

'True, Black can play 27...♘xa4, when White has merely a minimal advantage,' adds Gufeld. But, according to the computer, here the two sides' chances are equal.

27...♗c6



28 ♗xc6

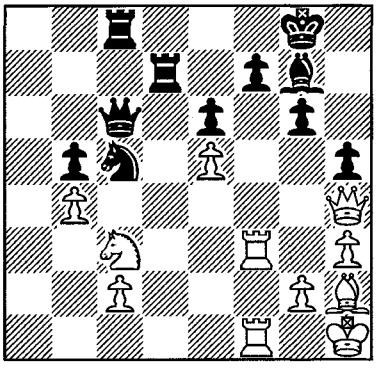
'Either now or on the previous move ♗xh5 was essential, when the picture would still have remained unclear.' (Flohr). Alas, 28 ♗xh5?! was now too late: 28....gxh5 29 ♕h4 ♕d8 (29...♕e7!? with the idea of ...♘d7-f8-g6) 30 ♕xh5 ♕d2! (30...♘xa4!?) 31 ♖g3 (31 ♖e2 ♕h6 and wins) 31...♕xc2 32 a5 ♘e4! 33 ♖g4 (if 33 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 34 ♕g4+ ♔f8 35 axb6, then 35...♕f2!!) 33...♘xc3 34 axb6 ♖b7 35 bxc3 ♕h7! 36 ♕g5 ♖xb6 37 ♕f6 ♖b7 and Black wins.

28...♕xc6 29 ♕h4 ♖d7 30 ♖ef3 b5!

'Korchnoi launches a counterattack. Calm has descended on the kingside and, as often happens in the Sicilian Defence, the battle is decided on the queenside in favour of Black.' (Flohr)

31 axb5 axb5 32 b4?!

'A decisive positional mistake.' (Gufeld). This is probably an exaggeration, although 32 ♗g3 was indeed sounder, with a roughly equal game.



32...♘d3! 33 ♘e4

Because of the match situation Geller needed at the least to retain some complications, and with his flag about to fall he avoids the depressing 33 ♖xd3 ♖xd3 34 cxd3 ♕xc3 – here, with his 'bad' bishop and weak pawns, the limit of White's dreams is a draw: 35 ♕e4 ♖c7 or 35 ♕e7 ♕c7! 36 ♖xf7?! (36 ♕d6 ♗f8) 36...♕xe7 37 ♖xe7 ♖c1+ 38 ♗g1 ♗xe5 39 ♖xe6 ♗d4 40 ♖xg6+ ♔f7 etc.

33...♕xc2 34 ♘f6+?

'This is equivalent to capitulation. 34 ♘d6 was essential, when Black has a choice: to give up the exchange by 34...♖c4 or, which is stronger, himself attack with 34...♖a8 followed by ...♖a2.' (Flohr)

The second suggestion is dubious in view of 35 ♘xf7! ♖a2 36 ♕g5 ♘xb4?! 37 ♗g1! But 34...♖c4! (34...♘xe5 35 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 36 ♘xc8 ♕xc8 is equal) 35 ♘xc4 ♕xc4 36 ♕xc4 (36 ♕g5 ♕xb4 37 ♕e3 ♕c5!) 36...bxc4 37 ♖a1 (not 37 b5? c3) 37...♘xb4 (37...♘xe5 38 ♖c3!) 38 ♖c3 ♘d3 39 ♖xc4 ♘xe5 would have left Black with a symbolic advantage.

34...♗xf6 35 exf6 ♖d5 (easily parrying the only threat of ♕g5-h6) **36 ♖e3 ♕c4** (36...♕d2!) **37 ♕g3?**

The last grimace of time-trouble. However,

after 37 ♖e4 both 37...♘f2+ 38 ♖xf2 ♖d1+ 39 ♗g1 ♕c1 (Flohr) and 37...♕c3! 38 ♗g3 ♖c4 or 38 ♕g3 ♖f5 39 ♖xf5 exf5 40 ♖e2 f4 would have been decisive.

37...h4 0-1

Here Geller overstepped the time limit (for the third time in the match!) and Korchnoi won 5½-2½.

The semi-final match with Petrosian was uncommonly tough, viscous and unspectacular: nine draws and one win for the ex-world champion. The stakes were high, like never before: which of the Soviet stars would be able to oppose the irrepressible Fischer in the final? Petrosian was unable. However, at that time it is also unlikely that Korchnoi would have been able to stop the American...

In a satirical New Year story 'Match of the eras', published in *64*, great players from the past met our contemporaries, and each of them chose an opponent with a similar style. Korchnoi happened to be paired with... Emanuel Lasker! Well, such a comparison is quite appropriate. After all, Korchnoi himself once wrote: 'In his time Lasker remarked that with equal forces on the board the game is rarely interesting and usually ends in a draw. A player who does not like draws (and I am one of them) must somehow disturb the balance. Either he sacrifices something and thanks to this seizes the initiative, or he allows the opponent to attack, as compensation creating some weaknesses in his position, which he subsequently hopes to exploit. I like to entice my opponent in this way.' This very much resembles Lasker's manner of play.

This continuity is also indicated by small details, such as Korchnoi's comment on his game with Giorgadze (Batumi 1999), where after 1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 his opponent replied 3...♗b4: 'I don't rate this move too highly. The old rule "develop your knights first!", told to us by Emanuel Lasker more than 100 years ago, has still not lost its validity.'

Before and after the Escape

It was precisely at that time that Korchnoi's rivalry began with the young, rapidly progressing Anatoly Karpov. They had met back in 1969, when Karpov moved to Leningrad and his regular trainer became grandmaster Semion Furman, who had worked for many years with Korchnoi. The first serious game between them, in the 1970 USSR Championship, ended in the defeat of the debutant, who, however, drew a useful lesson from this: 'After analysing the course of the game, I realised this: before games with Korchnoi I should not rely on Furman's opening advice. During the years of their collaboration, Korchnoi had studied Furman and he would guess almost faultlessly not only the opening, but also the line which the game would follow. How many times did I notice this! But he was no longer able to catch me unawares, because, after listening to my trainer, I would go my own way.'

But in 1971, shortly before his Candidates battle with Geller, Viktor Lvovich played a training match with Karpov (for Korchnoi this was a well-tried way of preparing: in 1970 his sparring-partner was Bronstein, in 1973 – Hübner, and in 1976 – Timman). In five of the six games Karpov had White and in one he had Black. The result of this fierce domestic battle was 3-3 (+2–2=2). An excellent schooling for the 20-year-old grandmaster! However, in Karpov's opinion, 'Korchnoi also profited from the match: after making some corrections to his preparations, he crushed Geller practically without allowing any chances.'

Soon the two rivals exchanged painful blows: three rounds from the end of the Alekhine Memorial tournament (1971) Karpov won and as a result became one of the tournament winners, while Korchnoi won the decisive game in the penultimate round at Hastings (1971/72), where, scoring 11 out of 15, they shared first place.

Not only Hastings, but also the whole of 1972 turned out to be rather difficult for

Korchnoi. 'There was not a single event where I played easily,' he admitted in an interview for *64*. 'I was forced literally to "bend over backwards" in order to achieve my aims. My results were decent, but were inferior to those of 1969, which I consider to be my best year' (probably, also taking account of Mallorca in December 1968).

Nevertheless, for the Interzonal tournament in Leningrad (May-June 1973) Korchnoi arrived in excellent form – and he started with 8 out of 9! This included a substantial 4 out of 5 against his compatriots (because of the compulsory pairings, the Soviets contestants played against one another in the first few rounds). It was thought that his main rivals in the battle for the three Candidates places would be Larsen, Tal and Karpov.

Alas, Tal began with a draw and three defeats, and in the 6th round he also lost with White against Korchnoi after the modest 1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 b6 3 g3 c5 4 ♗g2 ♗b7 5 0-0 g6 6 b3 ♗g7 7 ♗b2 (later this was christened the 'Four Bishops Opening'). But Larsen, burning with a desire to rehabilitate himself after the crushing defeat in his match with Fischer (cf. the chapter 'Battle in Denver' in Volume 4), did indeed immediately surge ahead and take the lead – 5½ out of 6! In the 7th round he drew, and he was caught by Korchnoi. The next day saw the gripping encounter of the two leaders, which had a great influence on the subsequent course of the tournament.

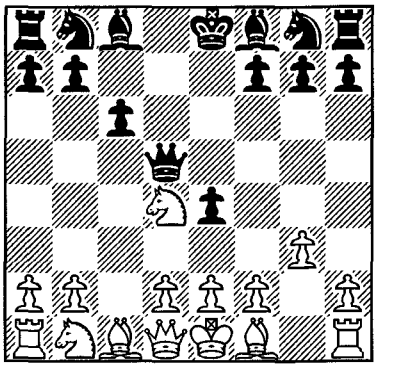
Game 20
B.Larsen-V.Korchnoi
Interzonal Tournament,
Leningrad 1973, 8th round
English Opening A20

1 c4 e5 2 g3 (2 ♘c3 allows set-ups with ...♗b4, but now Black can undertake activity in the centre) **2...c6 3 ♘f3**

More is promised by 3 d4 (Korchnoi himself played this in a match with Bacrot... in 1997!), but Larsen plays the opening in his favourite manner, provoking ...e5-e4. Previously he had felt very comfortable in such non-standard set-ups.

3...e4 4 ♘d4 d5 5 cxd5 ♕xd5!?

'Paul Keres used to prefer 5...cxd5 or 5...♘f6 6 ♘c3 ♕b6 7 ♘b3 cxd5. I twice failed to gain an advantage with White against Keres. Even so, in my home analysis I devoted more time to 5...♕xd5.' (Korchnoi)



6 ♘b3

Or 6 ♘c2 ♘f6 7 ♗g2 ♕h5 8 h3 ♕g6 9 ♘c3 ♗d6 with equality (Shamkovich-Bronstein, Moscow 1970). Comparing the resulting position with the well-known variation 1 e4 c5 2 c3 ♘f6 3 e5 ♘d5 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♕xd4, where 5...e6 is considered best, Korchnoi declares 6 e3 to be more promising. But, apparently, this move too did not bother him: 6...♘f6 7 ♘c3 ♕e5 8 ♗g2 ♗c5 9 ♘b3 ♗b6 10 f3 (10 d4 exd3) 10...exf3 11 ♕xf3 ♕f5 with equality (Hübner-Korchnoi, 7th matchgame, Solingen 1973).

6...♘f6 (subsequently 6...♗f5!? 7 ♗g2 ♕d7 was also tried, with equality) **7 ♗g2**

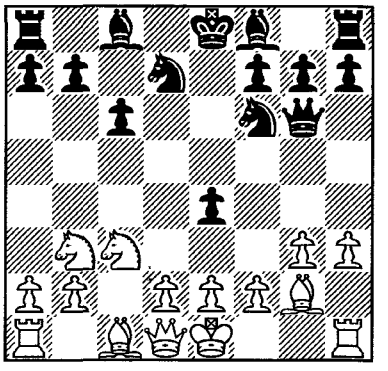
In the event of 7 ♘c3 ♕h5 8 d3?! exd3 9 ♕xd3 ♘a6! Black has an excellent game (Larsen-Gulko, Hastings 1988/89).

7...♕h5 (with the idea of 8 ♘c3 ♗h3!) **8 h3**

Korchnoi parries Igor Zaitsev's recommendation 8 ♕c2 both by the sharp 8...♗h3 9 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 10 ♕xe4+ ♗e7 11 ♘c3 ♘d7 with compensation for the pawn, and by the quiet 8...♗f5 9 ♘d4 ♗g6 10 ♕b3 b6 with equality.

8...♕g6 9 ♘c3 ♘bd7

As it later transpired, this is not the most accurate move. 9...♘a6! was better, leaving open the diagonal of the bishop at c8 and threatening a possible ...♘b4.



10 ♕c2!

'This move leads to a position with some advantage for White. I was more afraid of 10 0-0 ♗d6 11 d3 exd3 12 e4,' writes Korchnoi. At the board he calculated the variation 12...♘e5! 13 f4 ♕xg3 14 fxe5 ♗xe5?! and did not see the reply 14...♗xh3! 15 ♕f3 ♕xg2+ 16 ♕xg2 ♗xg2, which would have placed White on the verge of defeat: 17 ♖xf6 gxf6 18 exd6 ♖g8 19 ♔f2 h5! or 17 ♔xg2 ♗xe5 18 ♖f5?! (18 ♗g5 is more tenacious) 18...♘g4! etc.

I should mention that 13 ♔h2? (instead of 13 f4?) is also bad: 13...h5! 14 f4 h4 15 g4 ♗xg4! with a powerful attack for Black. It would appear that here White must play 13 ♗f4 0-0 14 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 15 ♕xd3, thinking only about equality.

10...e3 11 ♕xg6 exf2+! (after 11...exd2+?! 12 ♗xd2 hxg6 Black's task is more difficult)

12 ♔xf2 hxg6 13 d4

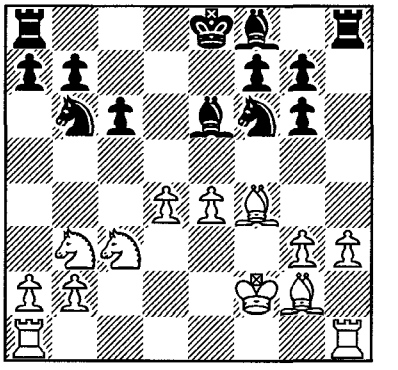
'White engages in an open battle. The pawn centre that he now erects is a strength of his position, but it also demands constant defence. The modest 13 d3 came into consideration.' (Korchnoi)

13...♘b6 14 e4 ♗e6

Korchnoi was obviously hoping that he would be able to put pressure on the e4- and d4-pawns – after all, he had often succeeded with such counterattacks in the Grünfeld Defence. Here too, in the end, this plan justified itself, although not without Larsen's assistance.

15 ♗f4

Subsequently 15 ♘c5 0-0-0?! 16 ♘xe6 fxe6 occurred in the game Smagin-Naumkin (Moscow 1984), and here 17 e5! with the idea of ♗e4 would have given White an appreciable advantage. Therefore 15...♗xc5 16 dxc5 ♘c4 was correct, and since the white bishop has not yet come out to f4, the black knight acquires an excellent post at e5.



15...♗b4

Retaining the option of kingside castling. 15...0-0-0!? would have excluded 16 ♘c5? in view of 16...♖xd4, but apart from the quiet 16 ♖ad1 it would have allowed the sharp breakthrough 16 d5!? cxd5 17 ♖ac1 ♔d7 18 ♖cd1! ♔c8 19 ♘b5 ♖d7 20 ♘xa7+ ♔d8 21 ♘b5. This may not be bad for Black, but it has to be agreed that such running about with the king seems very unpleasant and risky, especially in such an important game.

16 ♘c5!

This not only 'looks very strong', but it is indeed so! However, White would also have retained some initiative with 16 ♖ac1 (Osnos) 16...♘h5 (16...0-0-0? 17 d5; 16...♗xb3?! 17 axb3 0-0-0 18 d5!) 17 ♗e3 ♘c4 18 d5, or 16 ♖ad1 0-0-0 (after Korchnoi's move 16...♖d8 again 17 ♘c5! is good) 17 g4, and if 17...♖he8, then 18 d5!

16...0-0-0!

The most sensible: both developing, and defending the pawn. 16...♖d8 17 e5! or 16...♗xc5 17 dxc5 ♘bd7 18 ♗d6 (Korchnoi) was less good.

17 ♘xe6!

'Played without hesitation. I envy people, who stride through life without a shadow of doubt about where they are going.' (Korchnoi). Although in the given instance there was no particular choice: 17 ♖ad1 ♖xd4! or 17 a3 ♗xc5 18 dxc5 ♘c4 could not have satisfied White.

17...fxe6

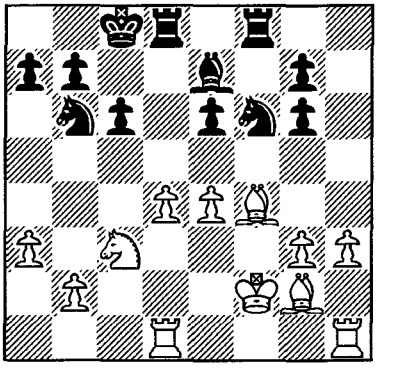
In Korchnoi's opinion, Black now has some advantage(!): his trumps are threats along the newly-opened f-file and weaknesses in the opponent's position (in particular, the g3-pawn). However, Black also has some obvious weaknesses – the pawns at e6, g6 and g7. White has not only the better pawn structure, but also the two bishops, and the light-squared bishop may come into play with great effect. True, because of his insecure king he has to play very carefully, and Larsen fails to cope with this problem.

18 a3?!

An error that was not noticed by anyone. 18 ♘e2! was much stronger, and if 18...♖hf8, then 19 h4 with a clear advantage: 19...♘h5 20 ♗h3, or 19...♘c4 20 b3 ♘d2 21 e5 ♘d5 (21...♘h5 22 ♔e3) 22 ♖ac1! It is better to play 18...♘h5, in order after 19 ♖ad1 to fight for a draw by 19...♘xf4 (not 19...♖hf8 20 ♗f3, or 19...♘c4 20 ♗c1 e5 21 b3!) 20 ♘xf4 ♖he8 21 h4 ♖xd4!? 22 ♖xd4 ♗c5 23 ♖hd1 e5 24 ♗h3+ ♔b8 25 ♘e6 ♗xd4+ 26 ♘xd4 exd4 27 ♖xd4 c5 28 ♖d6 ♖xe4 29 ♖xg6 ♖e7. But here too White's chances are better: with play on both flanks, the bishop dominates the knight (Fischer would probably have played on in this endgame down to the bare kings!).

18...♗e7 19 ♖ad1 ♖hf8

19...♘c4?! 20 ♗c1 e5 is inaccurate in view of 21 d5 ♖hf8 22 ♔e2 ♘h5 23 ♖d3, and White's position is better: Black has no possibility of developing an initiative. But now ...g6-g5 is threatened. The critical moment of the game has been reached.



20 ♔e2?

An imperceptible, but serious mistake, which loses a very important tempo. 'In the event of 20 ♗f3 the variation 20...♘c4 21 ♗c1 ♖xd4 or 21...e5 would have gained in strength.' (Korchnoi). 21 b3 ♘xa3 22 d5! is more energetic, when the activity of White's bishops compensates for the loss of the pawn.

But the immediate 20 h4! was undoubtedly the most correct, for example: 20...♘h5 21 ♗h3 ♘xf4 22 gxf4 ♖xf4+ 23 ♔g3! (defending the h4-pawn) 23...♖df8 24 ♗xe6+ ♔c7 25 ♖d3, and the position is one of dynamic balance.

20...♘c4!

A powerful *zwischenzug*, setting White great problems. Perhaps Larsen had been expecting 20...♘h5 21 ♗f3! ♘xf4+ 22 gxf4 ♖xf4 23 ♗g4 with a roughly equal game: 23...♔d7 24 d5 ♖df8 25 ♔d3 etc.

21 h4?!

'An excellent counterattacking resource! This move, intending ♗h3 with an attack on the black king, was not one that I had expected.' (Korchnoi). But that which was the strongest just a move ago now causes White nothing but problems. However, he had a difficult choice: 21 ♗c1?! ♘h5 22 ♖d3 c5! (Zaitsev) 23 dxc5 (23 d5? ♘e5) 23...♗xc5, or 23 b3 cxd4 24 bxc4 dxc3, attacking on the

dark squares. One also does not want to give up a pawn by 21 b3 ♘xa3, but objectively this was the best chance.

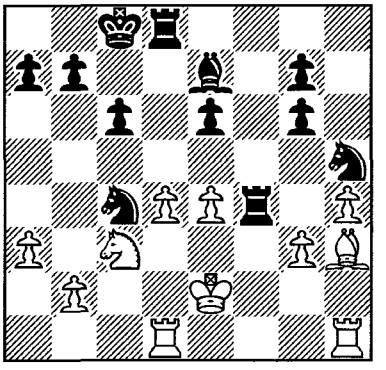
21...♘h5!

Pretty and unexpected. Black begins a counterattack, in the first instance getting rid of the dangerous bishop at f4. 21...♘xb2!? suggests itself. Korchnoi did not like 22 ♖b1 ♗xa3 23 ♗h3 ♖xd4 (23...♖fe8 24 d5) 24 ♗xe6+ ♘d7 (*? – G.K.*) 25 ♗e5 c5 (*? – G.K.*) 26 ♗xd4 cxd4 27 ♘b5 and wins, but Black could have defended by 25...♖f2+! 26 ♔xf2 ♘d3+ 27 ♔e3 ♘3xe5 and, moreover, a move earlier he could have retained a clear advantage – 24...♔d8! 25 ♗e5 ♖b4 26 ♗d6 ♖e8! etc.

Korchnoi's choice testifies to the evolution of his style: whereas earlier he preferred to 'suffer' for a pawn, now he did not miss an opportunity to seize the initiative, and with the help of an exchange sacrifice.

22 ♗h3 ♖xf4!

A brilliant reply!



23 ♗xe6+?

The abrupt change of scene unsettles Larsen. 'This move was made from a feeling of contradiction, which is well developed in many grandmasters. It is, so to speak: "I will not allow you, my dear opponent, to lead me along the path of your variation – I have my own path!" ' (Korchnoi)

Of course, it was essential to play 23 gxf4 ♘xf4+ 24 ♔f3 ♘xh3! (24...♖f8 25 ♔g3! is weaker) 25 ♖xh3 ♘xb2. This, the best way for Black, was found by Korchnoi only many years later! There can follow:

1) 26 ♖d2? ♘c4 27 ♖d1 ♗xa3! (Korchnoi's recommendation 27...e5 is unclear on account of 28 d5!, but not 28 dxe5?! ♗xa3) with the decisive threat of ...♗b2, while if 28 ♘e2, then 28...e5! is now winning;

2) 26 ♖g1! e5! (Korchnoi suggests 26...♖xd4 27 ♖xg6 ♗f6 28 e5?! ♗xe5 29 ♘e4 ♖d3+ 30 ♔g4 ♖xh3 31 ♔xh3 ♘d3 32 ♖g5 b6 and wins, but 28 ♘e2! and h4-h5-h6 is stronger, for example: 28...♖a4 29 ♘f4 ♖xa3+ 30 ♔g4 ♖a4 31 h5! with counterplay), and it is hard for White to gain a draw after both 27 dxe5 ♘d3 28 ♘e2 (28 a4 ♖f8+!) 28...♘xe5+ 29 ♔g2 ♗f6 30 ♘f4 (30 ♔f2 c5 31 ♘f4 ♖d2+!) 30...♖d4 31 ♔h1 ♖xe4 32 ♘xg6 c5, and 27 d5 ♘d3 28 ♖a1 (28 ♖xg6? ♖f8+ and ...♘f4) 28...♖f8+ 29 ♔g3 c5 30 ♖hh1 (30 ♖a2 c4) 30...♖f4 or 28 dxc6 bxc6 29 ♘e2 ♖f8+ 30 ♔g2 (30 ♔g3? ♘f2) 30...♖f2+ 31 ♔h1 ♖xe2 32 ♖xd3 ♖xe4.

However, here extreme accuracy and resourcefulness would have been demanded of Black, whereas after the move in the game he has an enduring initiative with material equal, and White is forced to conduct an altogether unpromising defence.

23...♔c7 24 ♗xc4 ♘xg3+ 25 ♔e3 ♖df8!?

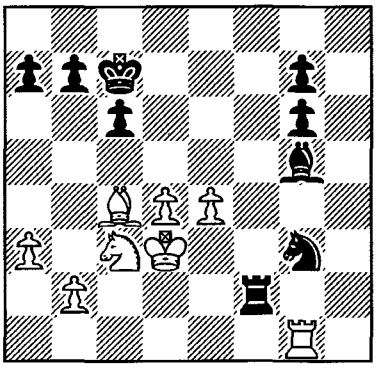
25...♘xh1 26 ♔xf4 ♘f2 27 ♖d2 ♗xh4 28 ♔f3 ♖f8+ 29 ♔g2 ♖f4 would have led to a technical endgame with an extra pawn for Black, but Korchnoi was playing for an attack – and I think that for Larsen this was more unpleasant! Usually opposite-coloured bishops help to save a game, but here, despite the limited material, Korchnoi succeeds in using this factor to create threats to the king.

26 ♖hg1

If 26 ♖h2, apart from the obvious 26...♗xh4, 26...g5!? 27 hxg5 (27 h5 g4!) 27...♗xg5 28 ♔d3 b5 29 ♗e6 ♖f3+ 30 ♔c2 ♘f1 is also strong.

26...♗xh4 27 ♔d3 (27 ♖de1? ♘xe4 28

♘xe4 ♗xe1 and wins; 27 ♖g2 g5 etc.) **27...♖f2 28 ♖d2 ♗g5!** (with minimal forces Black weaves a mating net in the middle of the board!) **29 ♖xf2 ♖xf2**



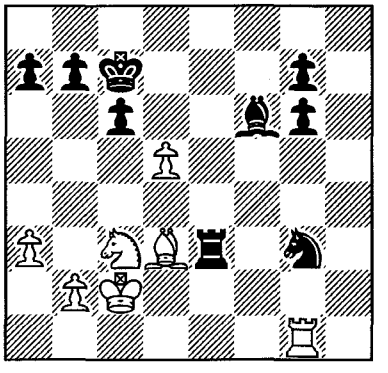
30 ♘e2

There is no better defence: 30 ♗f7 (after 30 ♗g8(e6) ♖d2+ 31 ♔c4 ♗f4 another pawn is lost) 30...♖f3+ 31 ♔c2 (31 ♔c4 b5+) 31...♗e3 32 ♖g2 ♗xd4 33 ♗xg6 ♗e5 and things are also hopeless for White.

30...♖f3+ 31 ♔c2 ♘xe4 32 ♗d3?!

32 ♖g4 was a tougher defence: 32...♘d6! (as Korchnoi puts it, 'Black needs to place his pieces such that they are not threatened') 33 ♖xg5 (33 ♗d3 ♗f6) 33...♘xc4 34 ♖xg6 ♖f7, and a lengthy conversion process still lies ahead.

32...♖e3 33 ♘c3 (33 ♖g4? ♖xd3 and wins) **33...♘g3 34 d5 ♗f6**



35 ♘d1

'The immediate 35 dxc6 was more accurate, when 35...♔xc6? would have lost material after 36 ♗b5+.' (Korchnoi). But 35...bxc6 36 ♘d1 ♖f3 37 ♗xg6 ♘e2 would have left Black every chance of success.

35...♖f3 36 dxc6 ♔xc6 37 ♗xg6 ♔d6

Despite the opponent's desperate resistance, Black is still a pawn up with the better position. The win for him is only a matter of time and technique, something in which Korchnoi is not lacking.

38 ♖e1 ♘f5 39 ♖e8 ♘d4+ 40 ♔d2 ♗g5+

'A weak move. The bishop was best placed at f6. But this was the 40th move, the last one before the time control.' (Korchnoi). 40...♖g3! would have won more quickly.

41 ♔e1 ♗h4+ 42 ♔d2 ♖g3 43 ♗e4? (a blunder, although also after 43 ♗d3 ♗g5+ 44 ♔c3 ♗f6 45 ♔d2 ♖g2+ 46 ♔e3 ♖g1 47 ♔d2 ♘f3+ 48 ♔e3 ♖xd1 49 ♗e2 ♖b1 50 ♗xf3 ♖xb2 the two extra pawns would have ensure Black a win) **43...♗g5+ 0-1**

White resigned: 44 ♔e1 ♖g1+.

Essentially it was this game that dashed Larsen's hopes of again reaching the Candidates: the painful defeat had a depressing effect on him. In the second half of the tournament he was quite unrecognisable and, after suffering a further four defeats, he dropped out of contention for the prize places.

As for Korchnoi, in the 9th round he defeated another dangerous rival – Robert Byrne (who had 6½ out of 8 at that point) and continued his confident progress. Incidentally, in the game with Byrne he employed the same rare plan against the King's Indian Defence that Taimanov had played in his match with Fischer, but with far greater success (cf. *Game No.39*, note to White's 9th move). Korchnoi annotated this game in such detail that 22 years later he merely added: 'Good comments. I would advise every young master to work on his won (and also lost!) games as much as I had to work here.'

But in the 13th round he unexpectedly lost to Rukavina and was caught by Karpov, who played the entire tournament very evenly and strongly. They also finished level, after each scoring a further 3½ out of 4(!), and in total – 13½ out of 17, a point ahead of Byrne, who undoubtedly played the 'tournament of his life'. However, Korchnoi too rates this Interzonal, like the tournaments in Wijk aan Zee and Mallorca (1968) among the best achievements in his career.

The favourites in the 1974 Candidates series were considered to be the ex-world champions Spassky and Petrosian. However, Korchnoi and Karpov overturned all the forecasts: the former defeated Mecking (+3–1=9) and Petrosian (+3–1=1), who resigned ahead of schedule, and the latter – Polugayevsky and Spassky. Details of these two encounters and the Karpov-Korchnoi final Candidates match will be found in the chapter on the 12th world champion.

It was then that the persecution of Korchnoi, which in the end led to him escaping from the USSR, began. I should remind you that the Candidates final would determine the opponent of the American Fischer, and the Soviet authorities decided to pin their hopes on Karpov. 'Our match was perceived as an important political action by all the organisations of the Soviet Union,' writes Korchnoi. 'An action which should have ensured victory for the young challenger – a Russian, a product of the working class, who was faithful and obedient to the authorities. He was given all the best resources, and was also provided with support outside of chess... When the match ended, it only remained to fulfil the second, easier part of the political objective that had been set – to punish me. To make an example of me, as a warning to others. For what? For independence in thinking and behaviour. But more concretely – for the fact that I had fought in this match, when it was already clear to everyone what *should* happen.'

The official ground for punishment was a sharp, angry interview which Korchnoi gave to B.Kazic on the conclusion of the match, which was published in the Yugoslav newspaper *Politika*. Here is this seditious and, as shown by subsequent chess history, in fact by no means objective, text (with his final conclusion Viktor Lvovich altogether 'guessed wrongly'):

'I think that Petrosian, whom I beat in the semi-final, is stronger than Karpov. And in general, neither Spassky, nor Polugayevsky, against whom Karpov won, is inferior to him in chess knowledge and talent. I think that I too can be compared with these grandmasters. I put up more of a resistance than they did... Karpov does not possess an extensive chess arsenal or great chess "assets". But he is a player of very strong will, with a fantastic striving for victory. With this enormous will-power he literally squeezed his opponents, including me... When I lost the match to Spassky (1968), I found it difficult. But I sensed his strength and I predicted his win over Petrosian. And Spassky did indeed become world champion. But about my last opponent I cannot say that a brilliant future awaits him.'

The response of the authorities was severe: 'for incorrect behaviour' Korchnoi was forbidden by a decree of the Sports Committee to play in any international tournaments for a year and his grandmaster stipend was reduced by one third. A campaign against him was begun in the newspaper *Sovyetsky Sport*, where his former friend, but now bitterest enemy, Petrosian published a response 'Regarding an interview by V.Korchnoi' and then indignant letters from readers appeared under the heading 'Unsporting, grandmaster!'

The year of disgrace, 1975, was certainly the most difficult in Korchnoi's professional career. In February, 'under the guise of intensive preparation for Karpov's match with Fischer, the leading Soviet grandmasters were obliged to present in writing their evaluation of the style and strengths of Fischer's play, and at the same time, for comparison, also that of Karpov,' but Korchnoi refused (a similar letter in

1972 had been sufficient – cf. the start of the chapter 'Battle of the Gods' in Volume 4). In March his invitation to an international tournament in Tallinn was cancelled. But soon Karpov came to his help. 'He had become world champion without playing the match with Fischer, and it so happened that the public were somehow beginning to forget those he had defeated: his victims, Spassky and Korchnoi, had fallen into disgrace, and hence into obscurity,' explains Korchnoi. 'Karpov took steps to bring me back into commission. I was allowed to play in the autumn Alekhine Memorial tournament in Moscow, and then also in Hastings (1975/76).'

It need hardly be said that in the Moscow super-tournament the most important game for Korchnoi was the one with Petrosian. I cannot avoid quoting a few of his remarkable comments, which date from the 21st century (I think that in general he is one of the best annotators in the history of chess).

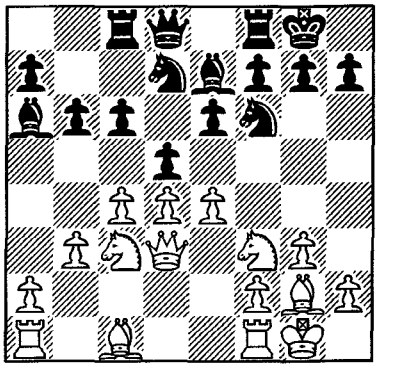
Game 21
V.Korchnoi-T.Petrosian
Alekhine Memorial Tournament,
Moscow 1975, 11th round
Catalan Opening E07

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 d4 ♗e7 5 g3 0-0 6 ♗g2 ♘bd7 7 ♕d3!?

'This rather strange move was shown to me before the game by Yakov Murey... And although it had been employed earlier – in my database I found the game Koblents-Bogoljubow (1939) – it is Murey, of course, who deserves the credit for establishing the move 7 ♕d3 (with my help) in modern grandmaster play.'

7...c6 8 0-0 b6 9 e4 ♗a6 10 b3 ♖c8

'Petrosian always treated novelties with respect. He never tried to refute them at the board, but looked in the first instance for the safest continuation. Later it was established that Black can equalise by continuing 10...dxc4 11 bxc4 e5 12 dxe5 ♘g4. Also, now or on the next move, ...b6-b5 came into consideration, forcing White to play cxd5. But Petrosian does not undertake anything active.'



11 ♗f4 ♖e8?! 12 ♖fd1 ♘f8 13 a4 ♗b4 14 e5 ♘6d7 15 ♗d2 ♘b8 16 ♕c2!, and since 16...dxc4 17 bxc4 ♗xc4? 18 ♘e4 is unfavourable for Black, White seized the initiative. On the 30th move Black was forced to give up a rook for a powerful knight at d6. 'And at the same time, for Petrosian the exchange sacrifice was a recurrent strategic theme – in this way he won a number of games!'

The game was adjourned twice (Korchnoi was helped in his analysis by his compatriot and old friend Spassky) and in total was played over three evenings, with White finding himself in time-trouble three times! In the end, the tired Korchnoi found an unexpected idea at the board on the 66th move. Petrosian immediately made a mistake and on the 74th move he conceded defeat. Korchnoi's epilogue: 'A few years later Yakov Murey wrote to me: "This game was won by three of us – by me in the opening, by you in the middlegame, and by Spassky in the endgame." This is the truth. I should like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to Boris Spassky for his excellent adjournment analysis.'

It was that autumn, in November, that I first met Karpov and Korchnoi at the chessboard – in the then popular tournament of Pioneers'

Palaces. In each round the grandmaster captain played simultaneously against seven young opponents, then his result was added to the result of his team, and the winners were those who ultimately gained the greatest number of points. Karpov played for Chelyabinsk, Korchnoi for Leningrad, Smyslov for Moscow, Bagirov for my native Baku, and so on.

The Baku team was not very strong, and I, a 12-year-old candidate master, frequently had to effectively play one to one with the grandmaster, who devoted the main attention to the game with his most dangerous opponent. In the 1st round I lost from an excellent position to Smyslov, in the 2nd I earned a point in a rook ending with Katalymov, and in the 3rd I made a draw from a position of strength with Polugayevsky. In the 4th round, playing against Karpov, I altogether finished up playing alone – and, alas, I was unable to hold my ground, although I again had an excellent position. Then came a draw with Kuzmin. And in the 6th and final round we played Korchnoi, who was engaged in a desperate struggle with Karpov and Smyslov for the best result among the grandmasters, while the Leningrad team was competing with Moscow for first place in the overall score.

The display took an exceptionally tense course: Korchnoi played with enormous drive – he was trying to finish ahead of Karpov at any price. For him this was a crucial matter – to gain at least a minor revenge! I played the King's Indian Defence and, on encountering the Sämisch Variation, I sacrificed a pawn to gain compensation in the form of a powerful dark-squared bishop against a knight. In the endgame Black seized the initiative and Korchnoi had to solve some very difficult problems. Eventually he held out, but at the cost of great effort, and the grandmaster lost an 'extra' point on the other boards. Thus it was Smyslov who finished with the best result – 38 out of 42, with Karpov and Korchnoi half a point behind. True, the points gained by Karpov carried more weight: in contrast to his rivals, he played against both of the strongest teams – Moscow and Leningrad... The emotions of Viktor Lvovich were plain to see.

His farewell 'Soviet finale' was his victory on board one in the USSR Team Cup (Tbilisi, April 1976) – 5 out of 7, ahead of Karpov (4 out of 6), Petrosian, Tal and Smyslov. In the key match between Trud and the Central Army Club, it was the reserve Gipslis instead of Karpov who turned out to play Black against Korchnoi – and he was unable to withstand his opponent's onslaught. Something similar, you may recall, occurred at the 1939 Olympiad in Buenos Aires: Alekhine and Capablanca were also competing for the best result on board one, and when the Cuban missed the game with his main rival, the enraged Alekhine crushed the reserve player...

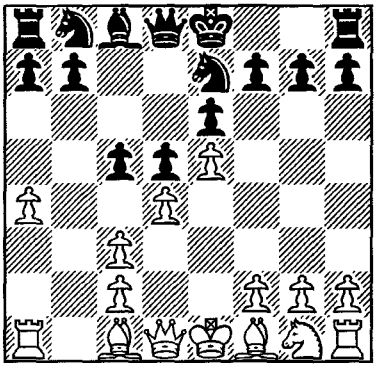
In July 1976 sensational news spread round the chess world: one of the winners of the tournament in Amsterdam, the four-times USSR Champion Viktor Korchnoi, had requested political asylum in Holland! By his own admission, the decision to leave had been taken at the end of December 1974. And later he repeatedly emphasised the purely professional motives for his action. He simply became aware of 'the need to leave for the sake of continuing, saving his chess life, which Party officials in alliance with certain grandmasters had decided to stifle.'

But, of course, the Soviet authorities judged Korchnoi's defection to be a political action and assailed him with the entire might of the propaganda machine: a statement by TASS, an extensive resolution by the Chess Federation, an open condemnatory letter by more than thirty Soviet grandmasters (not signed only by Botvinnik, Bronstein, Spassky and Gulko), and a separate condemnatory letter by Karpov... They were unanimously revolted by 'Korchnoi's unworthy behaviour' and approved the verdict of the Federation to 'deprive him of his sports titles and the right to represent the Soviet Chess School in the world arena.'

Meanwhile, Korchnoi had represented this school for a good twenty years, and he did this more than worthily: as a member of the USSR team he was the winner of five European Team Championships (+22–3=11) and six World Olympiads (+50–3=31). The last time he played for the Soviet Union, brilliantly as usual, was at the Olympiad in Nice (1974). Of his eight wins I especially like his 'French duel' with the rising star of European chess Jan Timman.

Game 22
J.Timman-V.Korchnoi
21st Olympiad, Nice 1974
French Defence C19

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 a4 (7 ♕g4 – *Game Nos.3, 14 and 27*)



7...♕a5!?

Either now or a move later, after 7...♘bc6 or 7...♗d7 8 ♘f3, this queen move eventually 'killed' the popular idea 7 a4.

8 ♕d2

In the game Fischer-Korchnoi (Herceg Novi blitz 1970) White tried to exploit the absence of the knight from f3 by 8 ♗d2 ♘bc6 9 ♕g4 (9 ♘f3 – *Game No.23*), but after 9...0-0 10 ♘f3 f6 11 ♗d3?! f5! 12 ♕g3 c4 13 ♗e2 b5 14 0-0 bxa4 he did not achieve anything.

8...♘bc6 9 ♘f3 ♗d7

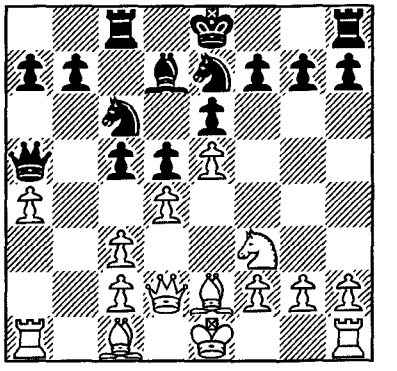
The main line – a flexible developing move, although Viktor Lvovich also tried both 9...0-0 and 9...f6.

10 ♗e2

10 ♗b5?! is dubious in view of 10...♘xe5! (Mnatsakanian-Korchnoi, Erevan 1965), while if 10 ♗d3, then 10...f6! (Fischer-Uhlmann, Stockholm Interzonal 1962; Tringov-Korchnoi, Skopje Olympiad 1972).

10...♖c8

10...f6 11 exf6 gxf6 12 ♗a3!? or 12 dxc5 (*Game No.12*) is sharper, but perhaps this would have been more in keeping with Timman's tastes...



11 ♗d3

This does not waste a tempo: with the rook at c8, 11...c4 and ...f7-f6 is weaker, since Black does not have queenside castling followed by counterplay in the centre and on the kingside, while if 11...0-0, then 12 ♗a3 is unpleasant. Therefore Black is forced to exchange queens. With this aim White can also play the immediate 11 ♗a3!? (11 dxc5 ♘g6 is equal; Smyslov-Uhlmann, Mar del Plata 1966) 11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 13 ♔xd2 ♘a5 14 ♖hb1 or 13...♘f5 14 c3 and ♖hb1.

11...cxd4 12 cxd4 ♕xd2+ 13 ♗xd2 (depriving the black knight of the b4- and a5-squares) **13...b6!?**

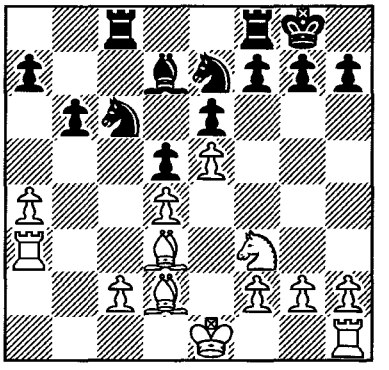
A novelty. Earlier Portisch and Uhlmann achieved equality after 13...♘f5 14 ♗xf5 exf5.

14 ♖a3

For the moment maintaining the tension, which would be quickly released after 14 a5

♘xa5 15 ♗xa5 bxa5 16 ♖xa5 ♘c6 17 ♖a3 ♔e7 (17...a5!?) 18 ♔d2 a5 19 ♖ha1 ♖b8, and Black has nothing to fear.

14...0-0



15 0-0 (White would like to leave his king in the centre, but in the event of 15 ♔e2 f6! it is hard to maintain the pawn at e5, or, after exf6, to prepare for ...e6-e5) **15...♖c7**

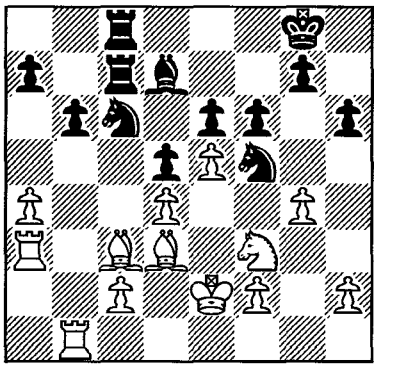
Now if 15...f6 there is 16 exf6 gxf6 17 ♖e1, and so Black does not hurry to attack the centre.

16 ♖b1 h6 17 ♔f1 ♘f5 18 ♗c3 ♖fc8 19 ♔e2 f6!

At just the right time. Smyslov recommended 19...♘a5, but after 20 ♗xa5 bxa5 21 c3! White would have had the chance of gradually approaching the doubled a-pawns. And it was not for the sake of such a passive position that Korchnoi played the French Defence!

20 g4

Driving away the knight before the exchange on f6, as otherwise it would be able to go to d6. With this move White effectively allows a draw, but Smyslov's recommendation of 20 exf6 (20 ♗a6 ♖f8!) 20...gxf6 21 ♗xf5 exf5 22 ♘e1, with the idea after 22...♘a5?! 23 ♗xa5 bxa5 24 ♔d2 ♖c4 25 c3 ♖xa4 26 ♖xa4 ♗xa4 27 ♖a1 ♗b5 28 ♖xa5 a6 29 ♘d3 ♖e8 30 ♘f4 of exploiting the weakness of the black pawns, did not promise any benefits on account of 22...♖e8+ and ...♖e4, as well as 22...♘e5!? 23 dxe5 ♖xc3, or even 22...♘d8!? 23 ♗d2 ♘e6 24 c3 ♖e8 25 ♔f1 ♘g5 26 f3 ♗c8!



20...♘fe7!?

A characteristic moment. 20...♘cxd4+ 21 ♗xd4 ♘xd4+ 22 ♘xd4 fxe5 suggests itself, for example: 23 ♘b5 (23 ♘b3 e4) 23...♗xb5 24 ♗xb5 (otherwise ...e5-e4) 24...♖xc2+ 25 ♔e1(3) ♖f8 26 ♗e2 e4 with good compensation for the piece, or 23 ♗a6 exd4 24 ♗xc8 ♖xc2+ 25 ♔d3 ♖xc8 26 ♔xd4 ♖c4+ 27 ♔e5 ♗xa4 28 ♔xe6 ♖xg4 with an easy draw. But Korchnoi is thirsting only for a win and he takes a definite strategic risk!

21 exf6 gxf6 22 h4

After 22 ♗a6 ♖e8 Black would have been threatening ...e6-e5. But the prophylactic 22 ♔d2!? came into consideration (Smyslov).

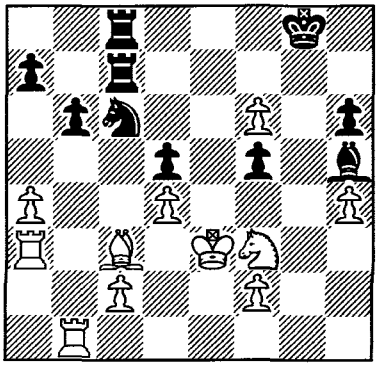
22...♗e8!?

Again, as a matter of principle, rejecting the simplifying 22...♘a5 23 ♗xa5 bxa5 – although after 24 ♔e3 ♔f7 Black has a solid position, in this way it is not possible to confuse his young opponent.

23 g5?!

It was hardly right to release the black bishop. 23 h5?! was also unfavourable, since after 23...f5! Black sets his sights on the h5-pawn. But 23 ♗d2 or 23 ♗a6 ♖d8 24 ♗d2 would have allowed White to fight for a positional advantage.

23...♗h5 (now one can more probably talk about a dynamic balance) **24 gxf6 ♘f5 25 ♗xf5 exf5 26 ♔e3**



After ridding himself of the potential threat ...e6-e5 and of the pin on his knight, White can at last think about the a4-a5 breakthrough.

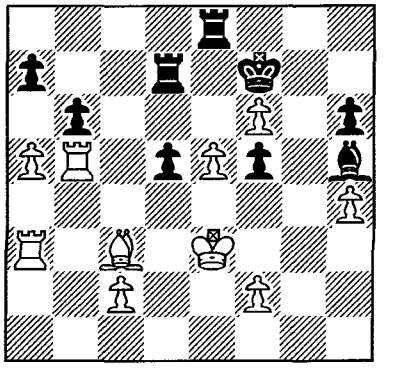
26...♔f7 27 ♖b5?!

A delay, and besides, on this square the rook proves vulnerable. White should have immediately played 27 a5! bxa5 28 ♗xa5, and after 28...♘xa5?! 29 ♘e5+ ♔xf6 30 ♖xa5 ♖xc2 31 ♖a6+ or 28...♖d7 29 ♘e5+ ♘xe5 30 dxe5 ♖xc2 31 ♖e1! ♔e6 32 ♗d2! he would develop a dangerous initiative. Therefore 28...♖e8+! 29 ♘e5+ ♘xe5 30 dxe5 ♖xe5+ 31 ♔d4 ♖e4+ 32 ♔xd5 ♖d7+ 33 ♔c6 ♔e6 is better, when the opposite-coloured bishops ensure a draw, despite the activity of the white king.

27...♖d7 (a seemingly passive move, but it strengthens Black's latent threats) **28 a5**

There is nothing better: 28 ♘e5+? ♘xe5 29 dxe5 is parried by 29...♖xc3+! 30 ♖xc3 d4+, whereas Smyslov's recommendation 28 ♔f4 ♔xf6 29 a5 is dubious in view of 29...♖g7! 30 axb6 ♖g4+ 31 ♔e3 ♖e4+ 32 ♔d2 ♗xf3 33 bxa7 ♖e2+ 34 ♔c1 ♘xa7 35 ♖c5 ♘c6, or 30 ♘e5 ♘xe5 31 dxe5+ ♔e6 32 ♔e3 (32 axb6? ♖g4+ 33 ♔e3 d4+! 34 ♔d3 ♖e4! 35 b7 ♗e2+ 36 ♔d2 ♖b8 and wins) 32...♖g4 33 ♔d3 (33 ♔d2 d4! 34 ♗b2 ♖f4) 33...♖e4 34 ♖b4 b5 with an obvious advantage to Black.

28...♖e8+ 29 ♘e5+! (after 29 ♔f4 ♖e4+ 30 ♔g3 ♔xf6 Korchnoi would have unexpectedly created a terribly strong attack: 31 ♘e5 ♖g7+ 32 ♔h3 ♗e2 33 ♖b1 bxa5!, and 34 ♘xc6? is not possible on account of 34...♗f3 with unavoidable mate) **29...♘xe5 30 dxe5**



30...d4+! 31 ♗xd4 f4+! 32 ♔xf4?!

Black's sudden switching to a counterattack (Korchnoi's favourite device!) throws Timman off balance. In time-trouble he begins to 'drift' and he misses a chance to create the maximum difficulties for his opponent by 32 ♔d3 ♗g6+ 33 ♔c3 ♖c8+ 34 ♔b2 ♖xd4 35 axb6 axb6 36 ♖a7+ ♔f8 37 e6!

32...♖xd4+ 33 ♔e3 ♖xh4 34 ♖d3 (34 axb6? ♖h3+ and ...♖xa3) **34...a6! 35 ♖d7+?!** (35 ♖bd5 would have retained good chances of a draw) **35...♔f8 36 ♖bd5?**

And this is a decisive mistake. 36 ♖xb6 ♖xe5+ 37 ♔d2 was essential, pinning his hopes on the activity of his rooks and the f6-pawn.

36...♗f7 (now Black must be able to convert his material advantage) **37 f4 ♗xd5 38 ♖xd5 bxa5 39 ♖xa5 ♔f7** (39...h5!? 40 ♖xa6 ♖h1) **40 ♖xa6 ♔g6 41 ♔e4** (or 41 ♖c6 ♖d8 42 ♔e4 ♖h1) **41...♖c8 42 ♖a7 0-1**

White resigned, without waiting for 42...♖c4+ 43 ♔d5 ♖hxf4 44 ♖g7+ ♔f5.

As often happens in chess, this duel had an interesting continuation. Soon after his escape to the West, Korchnoi played an entire best of ten games match with Timman, which served as a good warm-up for the 1977 Candidates cycle. The first two games ended in draws, but in the third, where Korchnoi again chose the French Defence, Timman's misadventures in the match began.

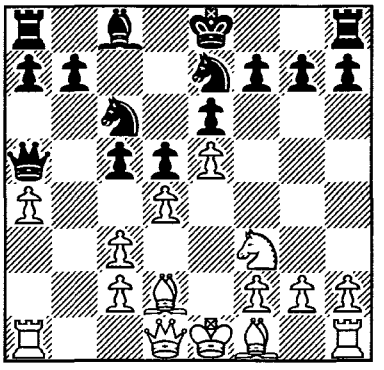
Game 23

J.Timman-V.Korchnoi

Match, Leeuwarden 1976, 3rd game

French Defence C19

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 a4 ♘bc6 8 ♘f3 ♕a5! (8...♗d7 – *Game No.12*) **9 ♗d2** (on this occasion Timman avoids 9 ♕d2 – *Game No.22*)



9...♗d7 10 ♗e2

Another *tabiya* of that time. After 10 ♗b5?! (with the idea of 10...a6 11 ♗e2!) Korchnoi introduced both 10...c4 (against Cherepkov, Leningrad 1964) and 10...♕c7 (against R.Byrne, Nice Olympiad 1974).

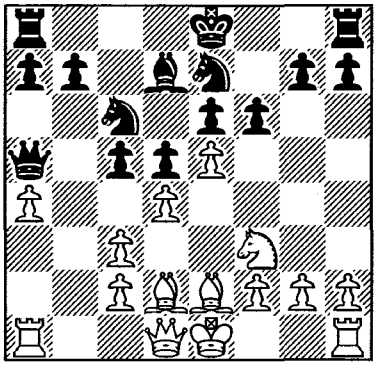
10...f6!

Another novelty. White's centre is undermined immediately after he has moved his c1-bishop a long way from a3. Previously 10...♕c7 was played (Kurajica-Timman, Skopje 1976), but more often 10...c4 with the idea of 11 h4 f6 (Fischer-Padevsky, Varna Olympiad 1962), or 11 0-0 f6 (Korchnoi also played this), but here Black was afraid of 11 ♘g5!? (the source game: Stein-Uhlmann, Stockholm Interzonal 1962), for example:

1) 11...0-0 12 0-0 f6 13 exf6 ♖xf6 14 ♗g4 h6 15 ♘f3 ♘c8? (15...♖af8!) 16 ♖e1 ♘b6 17 ♕c1 ♖af8 (17...♘xa4? 18 ♕a3 b5 19 ♕d6 ♕d8 20 ♖xe6!) 18 ♕a3 ♘d8 19 ♘e5! ♕xa4?! (in desperation: 19...♖xf2 20 ♖f1!!) 20 ♕c1 ♕b5 (Timman-Uhlmann, Skopje 1976) 21 ♖b1! ♕a4 22 ♖b4 ♕a5 23 ♖xb6 and wins;

2) 11...h6 12 ♘h3 0-0-0 13 ♘f4! with some initiative (Kavalek-Uhlmann, Manila Interzonal 1976), although subsequent practice showed that Black has considerable defensive resources.

Now White is denied the knight sortie, but perhaps he can punish his opponent for the weakening of his position?



11 c4

The most natural reply: White opens up the position, trying to exploit the power of his two bishops. In the event of 11 exf6 (11 ♖b1 ♕c7!) 11...gxf6 12 0-0 0-0-0 13 ♖e1 c4 the position is a reasonable version for Black of the 10...c4 variation, and after 14 ♕c1 ♖hg8 15 ♗f1 ♘g6 16 ♕a3 e5 (Tringov-Timman, Plovdiv 1983) or 14 ♗f1 ♘g6 (14...♘f5!? 15 ♕c1 h5 Uhlmann) 15 ♗h6 ♖hg8 16 ♕d2 (Anand-Arkhipov, Moscow 1987) 16...e5 he successfully solves his opening problems.

11...♕c7 12 cxd5

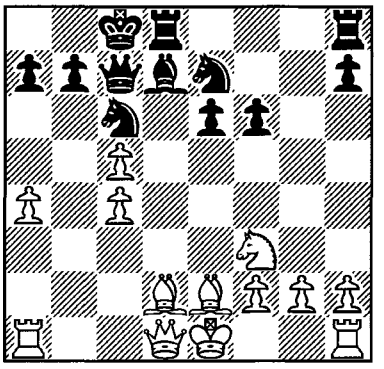
Or 12 exf6 gxf6 13 cxd5 ♘xd5, and here instead of 14 c4 Spassky against Korchnoi (4th matchgame, Belgrade 1977/78) played 14 c3 0-0-0 15 0-0 ♖hg8 16 ♖e1, but after 16...e5! 17 c4 ♗h3 18 ♗f1 (18 ♘g5 ♘c3!) 18...♘b6 19 d5 ♘xc4! 20 dxc6 ♕xc6 21 g3 ♗xf1 22 ♖xf1 e4 it was White who was playing for a draw. Later 16 g3 and 16 ♔h1 became the subject of theoretical debates, but not 16 dxc5 e5 17 ♔h1?! ♘f4! 18 ♗c4?! (18 ♗xf4 ♗h3!)

18...♖xg2 19 ♗xf4 ♖g4 20 ♕e2? ♖xf4 and wins (Lederman-Korchnoi, Beersheva 1978).

12...♘xd5 13 c4 ♘de7 14 exf6 gxf6 15 dxc5

Comparatively best. Nothing is promised by 15 ♗c3 0-0-0 16 d5 (16 0-0 cxd4 and ...♗e8) 16...exd5 17 ♗xf6 (17 cxd5 ♗e6) 17...♖hf8, or 15 d5 exd5 16 cxd5 ♘xd5 17 ♕c2 0-0-0 (Slobodjan-Zude, Bad Wörishofen 1998).

15...0-0-0



For the pawn Black has a good position in the centre and the prospect of an attack on the g-file. Similar situations, where White captured on c5 and tried to gain an advantage in positions with an extra (albeit tripled) pawn and an open centre, occurred back in the Smyslov-Botvinnik matches, and usually Black was able to demonstrate the viability of his position.

16 ♗c3 (16 a5 a6!) **16...e5!** (opening the way for the bishop at d7 and seizing control of the d4-square) **17 ♕d6**

Not wishing to subject himself to the risk of an attack after 17 0-0 ♖hg8, Timman hurries to exchange queens, hoping in the endgame to exploit the advantage of the two bishops and, for the moment, his extra pawn, which Black will have to spend some time regaining.

17...♘f5!?

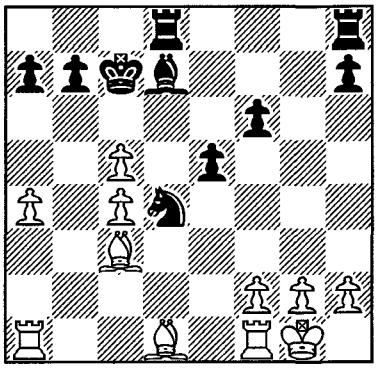
The most consistent, although 17...♖hg8 18 ♕xc7+ (18 ♕xf6 ♖g6! 19 ♕f7 ♖xg2) 18...♔xc7 19 g3 ♗f5 is also possible, with a sharp ending.

18 ♕xc7+ (of course, not 18 ♕xf6? ♖df8 19 ♕g5 ♖hg8 20 ♕d2 ♖xg2) **18...♔xc7 19 0-0**

White can also hardly hope for success after 19 0-0-0 ♘fd4 (19...♗e6 20 ♖he1!) 20 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 21 ♘xd4 exd4 22 ♖xd4 ♗xa4.

19...♘fd4 (if 19...♗e6, then simply 20 ♖fd1) **20 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 21 ♗d1**

In *Informator* Hartoch attached an exclamation mark to this move, but 21 ♗xd4! exd4 22 ♗d3 was sounder, blocking the potentially dangerous passed d-pawn. In this case 22...♔c6?! would have run into 23 ♖fb1 ♖de8 24 ♖b5, while the attempt to dislodge the blockading bishop from d3 – 22...♗e8?! would be refuted by 23 f4! ♗g6? 24 f5 ♗f7 25 a5! etc. 22...♖de8 23 a5 ♗c8 is better, maintaining a dynamic balance: the pluses and minuses of the two sides' positions are mutually equivalent.



21...♔c6!

It would appear that the young Dutch grandmaster was horror-stricken by this reply: the black king suddenly rushes into battle, with the intention of eliminating the white pawns. But White did not yet have any grounds for panic.

22 ♗xd4?!

The first step towards the abyss: it was hardly right for White to give Black a strong passed pawn. If 22 ♖b1 or 22 ♗b4 there was the unpleasant reply 22...♗f5!, but the imme-

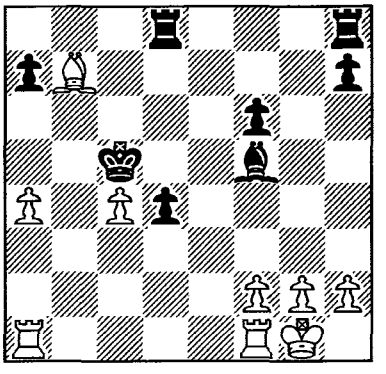
diate undermining of the opponent's centre was more energetic – 22 f4! ♔xc5 23 fxe5 fxe5 24 ♖e1 (Hartoch) 24...♔xc4 25 ♖c1, and the activity of White's pieces, especially his two bishops, gives him a perfectly good game.

At the most responsible moment, when highly important decisions had to be taken, Timman begins acting uncertainly and in literally two moves he loses the battle.

22...exd4 23 ♗f3+?

Probably this is already the decisive mistake. The bishop shouldn't have been moved from d1: if it could not block the pawn at d3, then at least it should have been kept on the queening square. White should have thrown all his forces into the battle with the d-pawn! 23 ♖b1 was essential, in order after 23...d3 24 a5 d2 25 f4 ♔xc5 26 ♖xb7 ♖he8 27 ♖xa7 ♗f5 to bring up the king by 28 ♔f2 and, apparently, escape the worst.

23...♔xc5 24 ♗xb7 ♗f5!



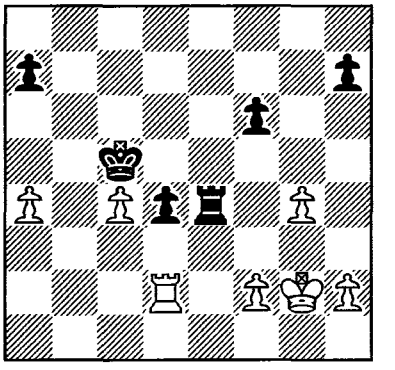
A very strong reply: now White cannot develop his rook via b1 and he has no defence against the threatened advance of the d-pawn. His extra pawn is not felt at all – the activity of the black king is far more important.

25 ♗f3 (25 ♗d5 ♗c2! and ...d4-d3) **25...♖he8 26 ♖a2 ♖b8** (26...d3!?) **27 ♖d2 ♖b1**

27...♖b4 was also good, but Korchnoi has chosen a way to convert his advantage that involves the exchange of a pair of rooks and the bishops.

28 g4 (28 ♗e2 ♖eb8) **28...♖ee1 29 ♖xe1 ♖xe1+ 30 ♔g2 ♗e4** (technically simpler than 30...♗g6) **31 ♗xe4 ♖xe4**

The fate of the game is decided by the passed d-pawn, supported by the king: the white king, cut off along the e-file, can merely watch as it inexorably advances towards the queening square.



32 ♔f3 (Hartoch's idea 32 f3 is defeated by 32...♖e3 33 ♔f2 ♖a3 and ...♖xa4) **32...♖e5 33 h4** (or 33 ♖c2(b2) d3! and ...♔d4) **33...♔xc4 34 ♖c2+ ♔b3 35 ♖c7 d3 36 ♖xh7 ♖d5 37 ♖b7+ ♔c2 38 ♖c7+ ♔b1 39 ♖b7+ ♔a1 40 ♖b5 ♖d8 0-1**

Korchnoi also won the 4th game, and in the end also the match ahead of schedule: 5½-2½. What was impressive was not only the score, but also the character of the play: Korchnoi played more freshly, forcefully and interestingly, and even such a brilliant, inventive player as Timman was unable to counter this. This confident victory over one of the strongest young players from the West became the start of the highest ascent in Korchnoi's chess career.

It was in the period from 1976 to 1980 that his brilliant competitive results were combined with an amazing richness of creative ideas, and Korchnoi's contribution to the development of chess reached its historic peak. And yet he was already nearly 50 years old! This achievement largely refuted previous impressions

about the optimum age for the greatest achievements in chess.

Here one cannot help remembering a sentiment from the aforementioned letter by Karpov: 'V.Korchnoi's decision to betray his homeland distressed me, because the step taken by him places under threat the entire subsequent creative activity of this chess player.' It is interesting to ask, what exactly was this threat? Perhaps the imminent boycott of the defector in all international tournaments where Soviet grandmasters were participating? Or perhaps Karpov had in mind the letter from the Soviet Federation to the FIDE Congress, suggesting that Korchnoi should be excluded from the forthcoming Candidates matches? However, the Congress and the 1976 Olympiad took place in Israel, and were boycotted by the Soviet Union and other countries of the communist bloc. 'In their absence,' writes Korchnoi, 'the letter from the USSR Chess Federation was read out, but in view of its absurdity it was not even discussed.'

The chess world held its breath in anticipation of the Candidates matches, in which a completely different intrigue had suddenly emerged...

Rout in Evian

In order to reach a match for the world championship, Korchnoi had to overcome a 'triple barrier' of his former compatriots. The 'blocks' standing in his way were Petrosian, Polugayevsky and Spassky.

This is how he recalls his quarter-final match with Tigran Petrosian (Il Cioccio, spring 1977): 'The first test took place in an atmosphere of deep hostility. Our chess strengths were absolutely equal, but my nerves proved stronger.' The quality of the play in that very difficult match of 12 games was comparatively low, with good ideas alternating with bad mistakes. After four draws Korchnoi won the 5th game, but Petrosian immediately hit back in the 6th. Then there was another draw. In the 8th game the ex-world champion achieved an obvious positional advantage, but in time-trouble he suddenly played 33 e3-e4??, leaving his rook at c1 en prise to a bishop at g5. This inexplicable blunder decided the fate of the game, and probably of the match as a whole. Korchnoi won 6½-5½ (+2–1=9).

The semi-final match with Lev Polugayevsky (Evian, summer 1977) turned out quite differently. Korchnoi demonstrated genuinely strong, confident and interesting play – and as a result he literally crushed his opponent. He indicated his match strategy straight away in the first game: employing a very rare continuation, he unexpectedly went into an ending where he was the exchange up, but Polugayevsky had compensation that was more than sufficient to maintain the balance. However, acting with great energy and invention, Korchnoi gradually converted his exchange advantage.

This game probably suggested to him that complicated, non-standard endgame positions were a weak spot for the opponent and that by going into such endings it was possible to neutralise Polugayevsky's brilliant opening preparation. In the next game too, events developed along similar lines.

Game 24
L.Polugayevsky-V.Korchnoi
Candidates Semi-Final Match,
Evian 1977, 2nd game
Queen's Indian Defence E19

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♗b7 (4...♗a6 – *Game Nos.90, 91 and 98*) **5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 0-0** (6 ♘c3 ♘e4 7 ♗d2 – *Game Nos.97 and 99*) **6...0-0 7 ♘c3**

For the 1980 match between the same opponents, Polugayevsky prepared the sharp 7 d5!? (*Volume 3, Game No.27*).

7...♘e4 8 ♕c2 ♘xc3 9 ♕xc3 f5

The other continuations in this popular opening *tabiya*, which has also been employed many times by Korchnoi, are mentioned in

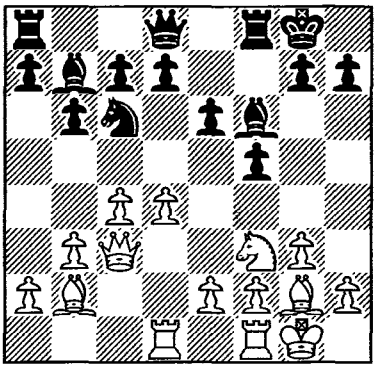
the notes to Euwe-Keres (*Volume 2, Game No.23*).

10 b3 ♗f6 11 ♗b2 ♘c6

Three years later 11...d6 12 ♖ad1 a5!? was tested (instead of the usual 12...♕e7, as Reshevsky played back in 1940, and then also Botvinnik against Tal, 21st matchgame, Moscow 1960) 13 ♘e1 ♗xg2 14 ♘xg2 ♘c6, and Black twice maintained the balance (Polugayevsky-Korchnoi, 2nd and 4th matchgames, Buenos Aires 1980).

12 ♖ad1!

A more accurate move than 12 ♕d2, to which Black also replied 12...♘e7 13 ♘e1 ♗xg2 14 ♘xg2 g5!? 15 ♖ad1 ♘g6 16 f3 ♕e7 17 e4 fxe4 18 fxe4 ♗g7 19 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 20 ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 21 ♔xf1 ½-½ (Pirc-Euwe, Amsterdam Olympiad 1954).



12...♘e7

The usual line, which replaced 12...♕e8 13 ♕c2 ♘d8 14 d5 ♗xb2 15 ♕xb2 exd5 16 cxd5 c5? 17 dxc6 with advantage to White (Boleslavsky-Taimanov, Zürich Candidates 1953). But in the game Miles-Korchnoi (Wijk aan Zee 1978) Black chose 12...♕e7!? and after 13 ♕d2 ♘d8 14 d5?! ♗xb2 15 ♕xb2 d6 (with the idea of ...e6-e5) 16 dxe6 ♘xe6 17 b4 (17 e3 a5 is equal) 17...f4! 18 ♖d2 ♖f6 19 ♕c3 ♖af8 20 a3 ♕e8! 21 ♕d3 ♕h5 he developed a dangerous attack and won on the 33rd move.

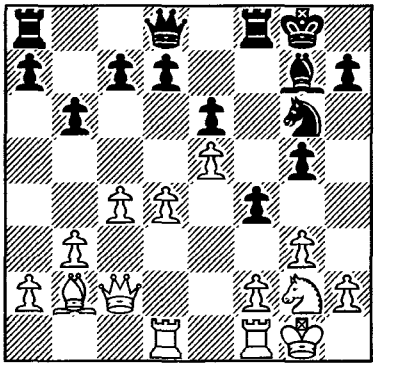
13 ♘e1 ♗xg2 14 ♘xg2 g5!?

In the footsteps of Euwe! It was traditionally thought that in such quiet variations of the Queen's Indian Defence White has a minimal plus, that he is not threatened by anything, and that he can play for a win without particular risk by gradually intensifying the pressure. But Black's move shows that he is not intending patiently to fight only for equality and that he wants to seize the initiative on the kingside.

15 ♕c2! (preparing e2-e4) **15...♘g6 16 e4 f4**

Of course, 16...fxe4?! 17 ♕xe4 would suit White fine, since in that case ...g7-g5 would prove to be a serious weakening.

17 e5 ♗g7



18 ♕e4

White maintains his pawn centre. Keene in *Informator* and after him Matanovic and Ugrinovic in the *Encyclopaedia of Chess Openings* recommended 18 ♗a3 'with a slight advantage to White'. But after 18...♖f7 (or immediately 18...c5, with the idea of 19 dxc5 ♕e7!) 19 ♕e4 c5 double-edged play develops: 20 h4?! gxh4 21 ♘xf4 ♘xf4 22 gxf4 ♕f8 23 ♗c1 ♗h6 and ...♗xf4, or 20 dxc5 ♘xe5 21 ♗b2 ♘c6 22 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 23 gxf4 gxf4 24 ♔h1 bxc5 25 ♘xf4 ♔h8 26 ♘d3 ♖f5 27 ♖g1 ♕e7 with approximate equality.

18...♕e7 19 ♖d3 ♖ad8 20 ♖e1 d5! (an excellent way of creating counterplay) **21 exd6**

Of course, not 21 cxd5 ♖xd5, but now the bishop at g7 becomes active.

21...♕xd6 22 ♖ed1

In the event of 22 ♕xe6+? ♕xe6 23 ♖xe6

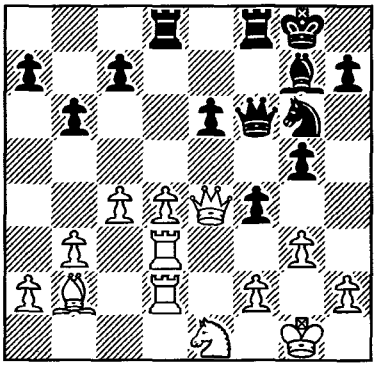
♘e5! 24 ♖d1 ♔f7 Black would have trapped the rook – the tactical justification of Korchnoi's idea! Therefore White supports his weakened d4-pawn, hoping subsequently to exploit the weakness in the opponent's position. Black, by contrast, is counting on a counterattack using his advanced g- and f-pawns.

22...♕e7 23 ♘e1 ♕f6

23...g4!? came into consideration, but apparently on the previous move Korchnoi had already intended ...♕f6-f5 with the exchange of queens and the consistent implementation of his plan. His opponent thought for a long time...

24 ♖1d2

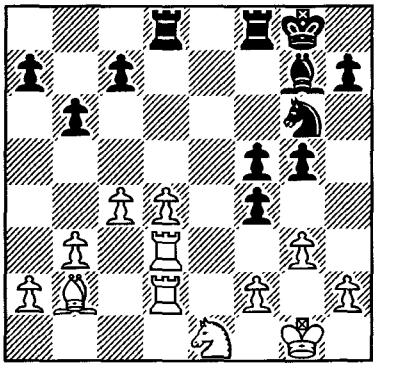
Up to a certain point Polugayevsky played quite logically, but when the situation became rather 'wild', lacking customary guidelines, he began to lose confidence. Thus here by 24 g4! ♘h4 (otherwise ♘f3) 25 b4 he could have obtained his desire – a slightly better and sound position, although, of course, there would still have been a complicated battle in prospect.



24...♕f5! 25 ♕xf5?

A seemingly natural, but faulty exchange, condemning White to an inferior endgame. After 25 ♖e2 he would have retained an equal game, and even possible chances of an advantage, for example: 25...♕xe4?! 26 ♖xe4 c5 27 ♖xe6 cxd4 28 ♔f1, or 25...c5?! 26 ♕xf5 exf5 27 dxc5 bxc5 28 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 29 ♖ed2!, seizing the d-file. 25...♖de8 is evidently better, with the idea of 26 ♗a3 ♕xe4 27 ♖xe4 ♖f5! or 26 ♕c6 e5 27 ♗a3 (27 ♕xc7? e4) 27...♘e7! with equality (it is extremely dangerous to play 28 ♕xc7?! e4 29 ♖d1 ♖f7 with the threat of ...♕g4, ...♘f5 and ...e4-e3).

25...exf5!



With time-trouble imminent, Polugayevsky apparently underestimated this capture: the opponent voluntarily doubles his pawns! But Korchnoi subtly sensed the dynamics of the resulting position: Black will most probably be able to seize control of the open e-file (in view of the unfortunate position of the white rook at d3) and his pawn group on the kingside constitutes a great strength.

26 ♘g2 g4!? (another surprise: 26...fxg3 27 hxg3 f4 suggests itself, immediately undoubling the pawns) **27 ♘xf4**

27 f3 came into consideration, but White, short of time, may not have liked 27...h5 28 ♔f2 fxg3+ 29 hxg3 f4.

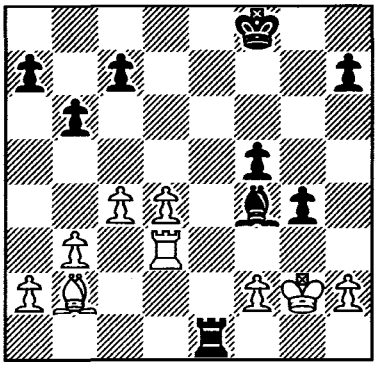
27...♘xf4 28 gxf4 ♗h6! 29 ♖e2 ♗xf4

After quickly getting rid of his doubled pawns, on 'his' flank Black has obtained a far-advanced pawn majority. White has to play very accurately to hold this ending.

30 ♖e6?

Completely thrown off balance both by Korchnoi's powerful pressure and by the unanticipated turn of events, Polugayevsky makes what is probably the decisive mistake. 30 ♖d1 was essential, continuing to fight for the e-file, and hence for a draw.

30...♖fe8 (now the e-file is under Black's control) **31 ♖f6 ♖e1+ 32 ♔g2 ♖f8** (one black rook invades the opponent's position, while the other eliminates his active rook) **33 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8**



34 d5?!

Some commentators recommended 34 ♗a3+, but after 34...♔f7 35 d5 ♖e2 White has nothing better than to go into a lost rook endgame: 36 d6 cxd6 37 ♗xd6 ♗xd6 38 ♖xd6 ♖xa2 39 b4 ♖a4 40 ♖d7+ ♔g6 etc. 34 ♗c3 ♖e2 35 a4(a3) was probably more tenacious, but here too after 35...h5 White has no way of opposing the combined onslaught of the black pieces.

34...♗d6 (34...♖e2!?) **35 ♗c3 ♖c1! 36 ♗d2 ♖c2 37 a4 f4**

The white pawns on the queenside are 'frozen', whereas on the kingside Black's pawns advance, at the same time creating, with minimal forces, an attack on the king (a favourite endgame stratagem of Korchnoi!).

38 h3 f3+ 39 ♔f1 h5 40 hxg4 hxg4 41 ♔e1 0-1

The sealed move. White resigned without resuming, not waiting for 41...♗c5 42 ♗e3 ♖e2+ 43 ♔f1 ♗xe3 44 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 45 fxe3 g3 or 42 b4 ♗d6 43 ♖d4 g3!

In the third game, where soon after the opening White reached a technical endgame with bishop and knight against rook and pawn, Polugayevsky again did not make use of all his chances, whereas with Korchnoi was able to set him insoluble problems enterprising play. After this win the score became 3-0 and the outcome of the match was no longer in doubt. But there were still numerous events to come, interesting from the purely chess point of view.

Incidentally, the games of this match and even Korchnoi's name were not published in the general Soviet press, and sometimes we learned the results after a week's delay (in fact, how could a Soviet player be whitewashed by some villainous defector?!). I remember how on one occasion my trainer Alexander Nikitin, with a conspiratorial smile, invited me 'to look at three recent games'. He showed them without making any comments, merely clicking his tongue in admiration after certain moves. And then he asked: 'What do you think, who were the players?' Straightforward deduction suggested to me that these were the first three games from the Korchnoi-Polugayevsky match. But it was hard to imagine that all three had been won by one player! These wins made a great impression on me, in particular in view of Korchnoi's irrepressible energy and inventiveness, which in the eyes of a 14-year-old candidate master did not tally with his image of a 45-year-old grandmaster...

After a double drawing respite, new trials awaited Polugayevsky. In the 6th game, with an overwhelming lead, Korchnoi ventured an experiment that was very bold for those times.

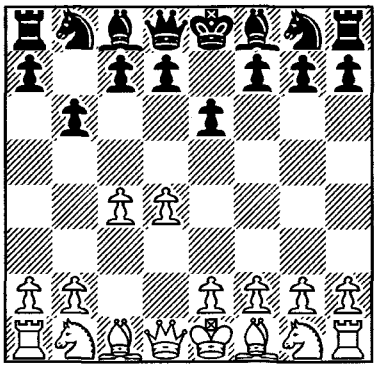
Game 25
L.Polugayevsky-V.Korchnoi
Candidates Semi-Final Match,
Evian 1977, 6th game
English Defence A40

1 d4 e6 2 c4 b6!?

At that time this was considered to be an irregular, 'crooked' defence, the theory of which was in a rudimentary state. In the 19th century it was occasionally played by English and American players, in the early 1920s – by the

hypermodernists Breyer, Réti and Nimzowitsch, and in 1975 it was seriously taken up by Tony Miles. His example was followed by Keene, Stean, Speelman, Plaskett, Conquest, Hodgson, King, Short, Adams, Sadler... So that this variation can rightfully be called the English Defence.

It was no accident that Korchnoi used one of the bold ideas of Miles, who was distinguished by his original handling of the opening (on one occasion he succeeded in beating none other than Karpov with Black after 1 e4 a6?! 2 d4 b5). This had an obvious psychological implication: deviating from well-known theoretical paths was especially unpleasant for an opponent exhausted by his preceding sufferings.



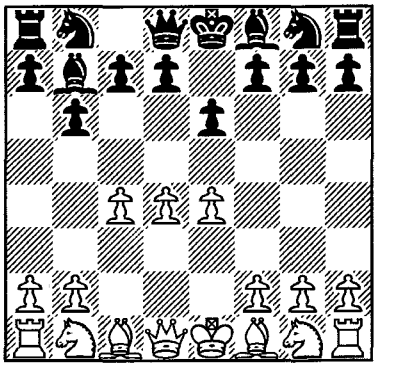
3 e4

The critical occupation of the centre. After the less aggressive 3 ♘f3 ♗b7 4 g3 ♗b4+ 5 ♗d2 (Rubinstein-Nimzowitsch, Gothenburg 1920) 5...♗xf3! 6 exf3 ♗xd2+ Black has good counterplay.

To 3 d5 Miles used to reply 3...♕h4, but when he lost to Karpov after 4 ♘c3! ♗b4 5 ♗d2 ♘f6 6 e3 (Bugojno 1978), he switched to 3...♘f6. And after 3 a3 he used to choose 3...g6 or the old move 3...f5 (Brien-Green, London 1856; Wisker-Bird, 3rd matchgame, London 1873), believing in Black's resources after 4 d5 ♘f6 5 g3 ♗b7. This belief was shared by Speelman, and Short, and Morozevich, who in this way gained draws against me (Frankfurt rapidplay 2000) and Karpov (Cannes 2002).

3...♗b7

After this White is at the crossroads.



4 ♕c2

A new way of defending the e4-pawn. Before this game and afterwards they defended with the pawn, knight or bishop:

1) 4 f3 ♗b4+ (4...f5 5 exf5 ♘h6!? 6 fxe6 ♘f5! 7 ♘e2 ♗d6 is sharper, Ree-Miles, Wijk aan Zee 1979) 5 ♗d2 (5 ♘d2?! f5! with the idea of 6 exf5 ♕h4+) 5...♗xd2+ (in tournaments in 1977 Böhm upheld 5...♕h4+) 6 ♕xd2 ♘h6!? 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 0-0-0 f5 with interesting play (Korchnoi-Speelman, New York rapidplay 1995);

2) 4 ♘c3 ♗b4 and now 5 ♗d3 f5! (Mason-Tinsley, London 1899; Kaplan-Miles, Sao Paulo 1977; Adorjan-Spassky, Toluca Interzonal 1982), 5 d5 ♕e7 (Tartakower-Réti, Gothenburg 1920), 5 f3 f5!? (apart from 5...♕h4+) 6 exf5 ♘h6 (Panno-Miles, Buenos Aires 1979), or 5 ♕c2 ♕h4 6 ♗d3 f5 (Farago-Miles, Hastings 1976/77), in each case with double-edged play;

3) 4 ♗d3! (the best reply) 4...♘c6 (Knott-Perren, 1st American Congress, New York 1857; 4...♗b4+ 5 ♗d2 Boden-Owen, 7th matchgame, London 1858) 5 ♘e2 ♘b4 6 ♘bc3 ♘xd3+ 7 ♕xd3, and Black's two bishops do not altogether compensate for White's spatial advantage. Therefore the sharp 4...f5!? 5 exf5 is in fashion, and since 5...♗xg2? 6

♕h5+ g6 7 fxg6 ♗g7 8 gxh7+ ♔f8 (Browne-Miles, Tilburg 1978) 9 ♘h3! is too dangerous for Black, he began playing 5...♗b4+! 6 ♔f1 ♘f6 – here the theoretical duels are still continuing.

4...♕h4!?

Again threatening the e4-pawn! But this is a risky move: the queen comes under attack. It looks sounder to play 4...♗b4+ 5 ♘d2 (5 ♗d2 ♕e7) and then 5...f5 6 exf5 ♘h6!? (Lalic-Kengis, Manila Olympiad 1992), 5...♘f6 6 ♗d3 c5 7 d5 b5! (Rogozenko-Teske, Dresden 1996), or 5...c5 6 d5 f5! 7 a3 ♗a5 (V.Mikhalevski-Young, Santa Monica 2004). 4....g6 5 ♘c3 ♗g7 6 ♗e3 ♘e7 7 0-0-0 0-0 8 f4 f5 9 e5 d5 has also been played (Levitt-Short, Calcutta 1998).

Now White has many tempting continuations, but which of them promises an advantage? I can imagine how Polugayevsky must have grown nervous, how long he must have stared at this non-theoretical position, holding his head in his hands... Being an inquisitive researcher, he did not like having to solve new opening problems at the board, and the score in the match in no way disposed him towards taking high-quality intuitive decisions.

5 ♘d2

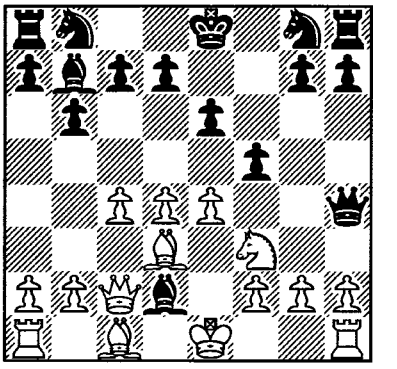
Avoiding 5 ♘c3 ♗b4 6 ♗d3 (6 d5 ♗xc3+! Ivanchuk-Sadler, Monaco blindfold 1998) 6...f5, transposing into the aforementioned Farago-Miles game, or 6...♗xc3+!? 7 bxc3 f5 – this was a novelty from the 1990s. At that time 5 ♗d3 f5, 5...♗b4+ or 5...♘c6 had also been tried, as well as 5 d5 f5! 6 exf5 exd5 with equality.

5...♗b4 6 ♗d3 f5?!

6...♕g4 is perhaps more accurate, for example: 7 ♔f1 f5! (Quinn-Speelman, Dublin Zonal 1993; Levitt-Ehlvest, New York 1994), or 7 ♘e2 (intending 0-0) 7...♕xg2 8 ♖g1 ♕xh2 9 ♖xg7 ♘c6 with sharp play.

7 ♘f3 ♗xd2+

Later 7...♕g4?! 8 0-0 also occurred, or 7...♕h5 8 0-0 ♘f6 9 h3 (quiet prophylaxis) 9...0-0?! (9...♗xd2 10 ♘xd2 ♘c6 is better) 10 e5 g5? 11 exf6 g4 12 hxg4 fxg4 13 ♘e5... 1-0 (Kiriakov-Shepherd, Port Erin 2000).



8 ♔f1?

Here are the fruits of Black's opening experiment. Nothing is offered by 8 ♘xd2 ♘f6 9 g3 ♕h3 (9...♕h5!?) 10 ♗f1 ♕h5 11 ♗g2 0-0 12 0-0 ♘c6 13 ♕c3 (Kiriakov-Tratar, Pardubice 1995) 13...e5! with the idea of 14 dxe5 ♘xe5! But it is surprising that Polugayevsky did not play 8 ♗xd2 ♕g4 9 ♘e5! (9 h3 ♕xg2 10 ♔e2 ♕g6! 11 ♖ag1 ♕f7 12 d5 ♘f6 is not so clear) 9...♕xg2 10 0-0-0 with a dangerous initiative for the sacrificed material.

Since now 10...♕xf2? 11 ♖hg1 ♕xd4 12 ♗c3 ♕e3+ 13 ♔b1 or 10...♗xe4? 11 ♖hg1 ♗xd3 12 ♕xd3 ♕e4 (12...♕xf2 13 ♖xg7) 13 ♕g3 g6 14 ♘xg6 is clearly bad for Black, he has defended by 10...fxe4 11 ♗e2 ♘f6 (if 11...♘c6 12 ♘xc6 ♗xc6, then 13 d5!) 12 ♗e3 ♕h3 13 ♖dg1 ♘c6! (Rogers) 14 ♘xc6 (but not 14 ♖xg7?! ♘xd4! or 14 ♖g3 ♕f5 15 ♖g5?! ♘xd4! Webster-Adams, Prestwich 1990) 14...♗xc6 15 ♖xg7 ♖g8 (15...0-0-0!?) 16 ♖xg8+ ♘xg8 17 d5 exd5 18 cxd5 ♗xd5 19 ♕xc7 ♘e7, holding the position.

However, 12 ♖hg1! is far stronger, since 12...♕xf2? runs into 13 ♗h6!! with the threat of ♗h5+ and ♕xf2, while after 12...♕xh2 13 ♗e3! the threat of trapping the queen (♖h1 and ♖dg1) prevents Black from successfully completing his development: if 13...♘c6 the restrained 14 ♕c3 is possible, as well as the impatient 14 ♖h1 ♘xd4 15 ♗xd4 ♕f4+ 16 ♔b1

0-0 (16...♕f5 17 ♖hg1) 17 ♘xd7! ♘xd7 18 ♗xg7! with an attack. 12...♕h3 13 ♖xg7 ♘c6 14 ♘xc6 ♗xc6 15 d5! also favours White.

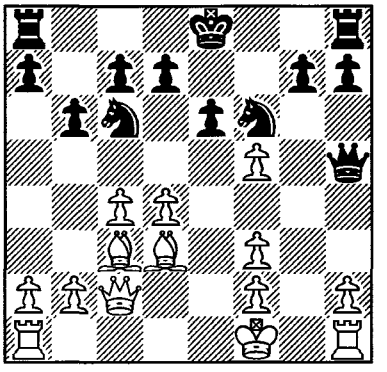
And if immediately 11...♕h3, then 12 ♖hg1 again sets Black difficult problems: 12...d6 13 ♖xg7! dxe5 14 ♖xc7, or 12...g6 13 ♗g4 ♕h4 14 d5! etc.

After the impulsive move in the game White does not gain any serious compensation for the weakened position of his king.

8...♕h5 9 ♗xd2 ♘f6 (another attack on the e4-pawn) **10 exf5?!** (10 e5 ♘e4 was nevertheless safer for White) **10...♗xf3! 11 gxf3**

After the 'bold' 11 fxe6?! there could have followed not only 11...♗b7, but also 11...♘c6! 12 exd7+ ♔f7 13 gxf3 (13 ♗c3 ♗g4) 13...♘xd4 14 ♕c3 ♕h3+ 15 ♔e1 ♕g2 16 ♖f1 ♘xf3+ 17 ♔d1 ♖hd8 18 ♔c2 ♖xd7 19 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 with advantage to Black.

11...♘c6 12 ♗c3



12...0-0

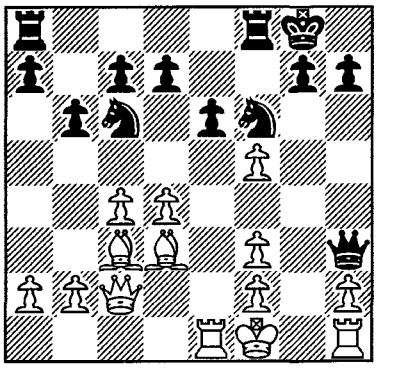
The premature 12...♕xf3 would have helped the opponent to coordinate his forces – 13 ♖g1 0-0-0 14 ♗e2 etc. However, more chances of an advantage would have been retained by 12...0-0-0!, analogous to the aforementioned Quinn-Speelman game (which went 6...♕g4 7 ♔f1 f5 8 ♘gf3 ♗xd2 9 ♘e5 ♕h4 10 ♘f3 ♕h5 11 ♗xd2 ♘f6 12 exf5 ♗xf3 13 gxf3 ♘c6 14 ♗c3 0-0-0!).

13 ♖e1?!

A waste of a tempo. White's position would still have been not so bad, had he played 13 ♖g1!, preparing to bring out his rook and evacuate his king.

13...♕h3+!

Again an unnerving move. Polugayevsky was expecting the natural 13...♕xf3, but then after 14 ♖g1 ♕h3+ 15 ♖g2 White has no reason for complaint: his bishops are very strong, and he may even be able to seize the initiative.



14 ♔e2

After 14 ♔g1?! ♘h5 15 ♕d2 ♘e7! White would have had to urgently exchange queens to avoid a mating attack: 16 ♕g5 ♘xf5 17 ♕g4 ♘f4 18 ♗e4 (18 ♗f1 ♕h6) 18...♘h4 19 ♕xh3 ♘xh3+ 20 ♔f1 ♖ad8, and the black knights are stronger than the white bishops.

14...♖ae8 (mobilisation, although some advantage would have been given by 14...♕h4!? with the idea of 15 fxe6 ♘xd4+ 16 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 17 ♔f1 dxe6) **15 ♔d1?!**

15 fxe6 ♖xe6 16 ♔d2 was correct.

15...e5! (again Black does not capture on f3!)

16 dxe5 ♘xe5

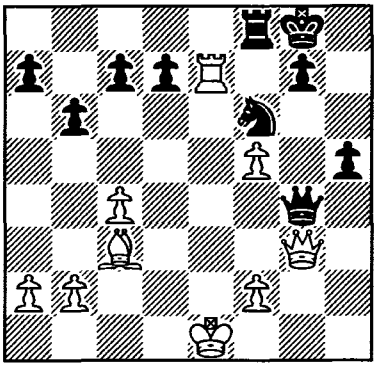
The position has finally clarified. White has not managed to relieve the pawn tension in time, and he has been left with tripled pawns, which begin to fall like ripe fruit.

17 ♗e2 (17 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 18 ♖xe5 ♕xf3+ was no better – Keene) **17...♘xf3! 18 ♕d3 ♖xe2 19 ♖xe2** (19 ♔xe2? ♕h5 and wins) **19...♕g2 20 ♖he1 ♘xe1 21 ♔xe1 ♕xh2**

Keene attaches a question mark to this move, recommending 21...♕g1+ 22 ♔d2 ♕xh2. Now 23 ♖e7? is not possible on ac-

count of 23...♕xf2+, while in the event of 23 ♔c2 ♕d6 24 ♕xd6 cxd6 Black has the better ending (25 ♖e7 h5!). However, after 23 f3! there is still all to play for.

22 ♖e7! ♕g1+ (not 22...♖f7 23 ♗xf6 with equality, but 22...♕h6!? was interesting) **23 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 24 ♔e1 h5 25 ♕g3!**



25...♕xg3?!

But this is indeed an inaccuracy. In another version of the rook ending – after 25...♖f7! (Keene) 26 ♗xf6 gxf6 27 ♕xg4+ (27 ♖e4? ♕xg3 28 fxg3 ♔g7 and ...♔h6-g5) 27...hxg4 28 ♖e4 ♖g7 Black would have had far more chances of success.

26 fxg3 ♖f7 27 ♗xf6 gxf6 28 ♖e8+ ♔g7 29 ♔f2 ♔h6 30 b4!

After reaching a rook ending a pawn down, Polugayevsky resists with all his might and creates real counterplay. It is hard to say whether Korchnoi could have improved Black's play during the following series of time-trouble moves (a detailed analysis of this endgame does not come within our remit).

30...♔g5 31 ♖a8 ♔xf5 32 ♖xa7 d6 33 a4 ♔e6 34 a5 bxa5 35 ♖xa5

35 bxa5 ♔d7 36 ♖a8?! (36 ♖b7 ♖f8) 36...♖e7! 37 a6 ♖e5 etc. was evidently less good for White.

35...f5 36 c5! ♖h7

If 36...♖g7 there could have followed 37 ♖a7, for example: 37...dxc5 38 ♖a6+ ♔d5 39 ♖a5 ♔c4 40 ♖xc5+ ♔xb4 41 ♖xf5 ♖h7 42 ♖f4+ ♔b5 43 ♖h4 c5 44 ♔e2 c4 45 ♔d2 ♔b4 46 ♔c2 with a draw.

37 cxd6 cxd6 38 b5 h4

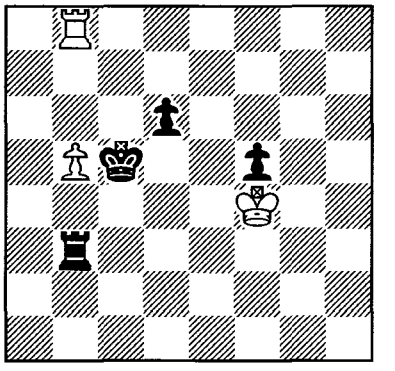
In the event of 38...♖c7 (38...♖b7!?) 39 ♖a2 there is no win by either 39...d5 40 ♖a6+ ♔e5 41 ♖h6 ♖c2+ 42 ♔f3 ♖c3+ 43 ♔f2 ♖b3 44 ♖xh5 ♖xb5 45 g4, or 39...♖b7 40 ♖b2 ♔d5 41 ♔f3 ♔c5 42 ♔f4 ♖xb5 43 ♖h2 ♖b4+ 44 ♔xf5 ♖b5 45 ♔e4.

39 gxh4 ♖xh4 40 ♖a8 ♖b4 41 ♖b8 ♔d5 42 ♔f3?

With their flags about to fall, both players had given up recording the game and, unaware that the control on move 40 had been reached, they continued playing at blitz tempo. As a result White missed the draw which was now very close: 42 ♖b6! ♔c5 43 ♖c6+ (Keene) or 42...♖b3 43 ♔e2 f4 44 ♔f2 ♔e5 45 ♖b8 d5 46 b6 ♔d6 47 ♖f8.

42...♖b3+? (but Black too misses a win by 42...♔c5! 43 ♖f8 f4 44 ♖f5+ d5 45 ♔e2 ♖d4)

43 ♔f4 ♔c5



44 ♖c8+?

A blunder. White should have stopped, recovered his breath and made the simple move 44 ♔xf5, which after 44...♖xb5 45 ♖a(d)8 or 45 ♖c8+ leads to a drawn ending with rook against rook and pawn.

44...♔xb5 45 ♔xf5 ♖e3!

Cutting off White's king along the e-file, after which his further resistance is pointless. This situation probably reminded Korchnoi of the ending of his third matchgame with Timman, where his d-pawn, supported by the

king, equally successfully advanced to the queening square (*Game No.23*).

46 ♔f4 ♖e1 47 ♖d8 ♔c5 48 ♖c8+ ♔d4 49 ♔f3 d5 50 ♔f2 ♖e5 51 ♖a8 ♔c3 52 ♖a3+ ♔b4 53 ♖a1 d4 54 ♖c1 d3 55 ♖c8 d2 56 ♖b8+ ♔c3 57 ♖c8+ ♔d3 58 ♖d8+ ♔c2 59 ♖c8+ ♔d1 0-1

I remember how Vladimir Bagirov, who at that time was Polugayevsky's second, demonstrated the games from this match in the Burevestnik Chess Club on his return to Baku and complained of the 'difficult match fate' of his protégé. I found it very interesting to look as though from one side at the analyses, stories and experiences of a person who had been in the very thick of things. To my surprise, I learned that in fact the struggle had been much tougher than it appeared – especially in the second half of the match. Polugayevsky's opening preparation was of very high quality, and at times he was able to pose Korchnoi rather serious problems.

Bagirov was especially upset by the 7th game, where there occurred a line of the Meran Variation, on the preparation of which he and Polugayevsky had spent much time and effort.

Game 26

V.Korchnoi-L.Polugayevsky

Candidates Semi-Final Match, Evian 1977, 7th game

Semi-Slav Defence D47

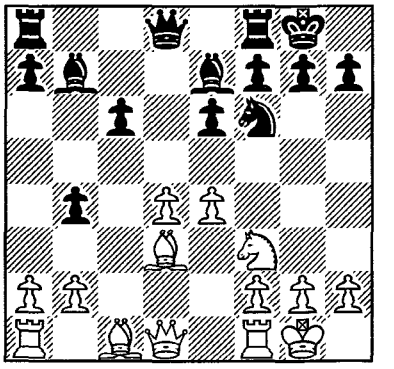
1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 d4 c6 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3 dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 ♗b7 (Larsen's creation – the so-called 'improved Meran')

9 0-0

Earlier 9 e4 was more popular (*Volume 4, Game Nos.43-47*).

9...b4 (9...a6 – *Game No.105*) **10 ♘e4 ♗e7 11 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 12 e4 0-0**

The 5th game went 12...♖c8?! 13 ♕a4 a5 14 ♖d1 0-0 and Black gradually equalised. But after 13 a3 (Keene) or 13 ♕e2 it is far harder to do this: the rook move may prove to be a waste of a tempo.



13 ♕c2

At that time 13 ♕e2 and 13 e5 were regarded as the main continuations, and this is also the case nowadays, for example:

1) 13 ♕e2 c5 14 dxc5 ♘d7 15 c6! ♗xc6 16 ♗e3 (16 ♖d1 ♘c5! Kramnik-Lautier, Monaco blindfold 2000) 16...♗b7 17 ♖fc1 ♗d6 (Savon-Vaganian, 38th USSR Championship, Riga 1970; Kasimdzhanov-Akopian, Erevan 2001), 17...♕b8 (Browne-Polugayevsky, Manila Interzonal 1976), or 17...♕a5, as M.Gurevich played against Lautier and Piket (2000), in each case with a minimal advantage to White;

2) 13 e5 ♘d7 14 ♕c2 h6 15 ♗h7+ ♔h8 16 ♗e4 ♕b6 17 ♗e3 c5! 18 dxc5 ♗xc5?! 19 ♖ad1! (a novelty; 19 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 20 ♗xc5 ♖fc8 with equality; 19 ♗xc5?! ♗xe4 20 ♗xb6 ♗xc2 21 ♗c7 ♖fc8 22 ♗d6 a5 Polugayevsky-Larsen, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970) 19...♗xe3 20 ♖xd7 ♖ac8 21 ♖xb7 ♖xc2 22 ♖xb6 ♖xf2 23 ♖xf2 ♗xb6 24 ♔f1 ♗xf2 25 ♔xf2, and White's two minor pieces outweighed the rook and pawn (3rd game).

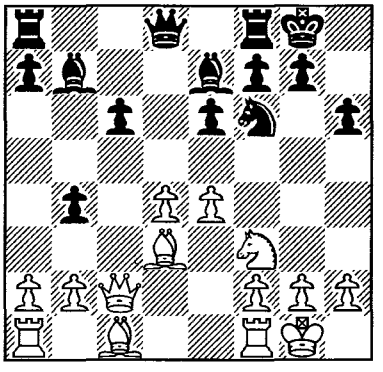
This endgame can be avoided by 19...♗xe4 20 ♖ad1 ♖ad8, but here too White retains some pressure: 21 ♗g5!? (after 21 ♖d6 ♕a5 22 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 23 ♕c4 there is 23...♖c8) 21...♗xf2+ (21...hxg5? 22 ♘xg5 is bad for Black, while if 21...f6, then 22 ♗h4) 22 ♖xf2

♘f6 23 ♖xd8 (23 ♕e1 ♖xd1 24 ♕xd1 ♘g4! 25 ♗h4 ♖c8 26 ♘e1 ♘xf2 27 ♗xf2 ♕a5 is unclear) 23...♘xe4 24 ♖xf8+ ♔h7 25 ♗h4, obtaining rook, bishop and knight for the queen.

Apparently, Polugayevsky underestimated the drawbacks to 18...♗xc5?! in his preparations. Otherwise he would have found the simple 18...♘xc5! (a novelty of the 1990s) 19 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 20 ♗xc5 ♖fc8, or 19 ♗xc5 ♗xe4 20 ♕xe4 ♗xc5 21 ♖ac1 ♖ad8 followed by ...♖d5 and ...♖fd8 with equality.

Now instead of 14 ♕c2 White plays 14 ♗e4, and after 14...♖b8 he unexpectedly sacrifices a pawn – 15 a3!? bxa3 16 b4 a5?! (16...♗xb4? 17 ♗xh7+!) 17 bxa5 ♕xa5 18 ♗xa3 ♗xa3 19 ♗xh7+! (the same combination, but in more complicated form) 19...♔xh7 20 ♘g5+ ♔g6 21 ♕d3+ f5 (21...♔xg5 22 f4+ ♔h6 23 ♕h3+ ♔g6 24 f5+ exf5 25 ♖f3 f6 26 ♖f5! ♖h8 27 ♕g4+ ♔f7 28 e6+, winning the queen) 22 ♘xe6 with crushing threats (Kasimdzhanov-Lesiege, Istanbul Olympiad 2000), although 16...f5 is sounder (Khalifman-Bareev, Dortmund 2000). But these are nuances from the turn of the 20th-21st centuries...

13...h6



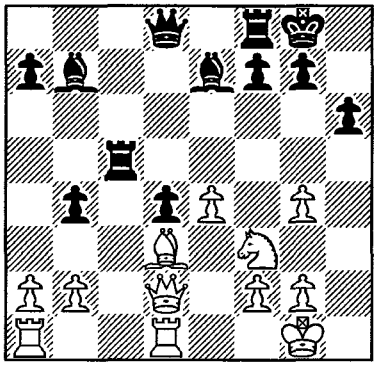
14 ♗e3

A novelty which, however, does not cause Black any particular problems. 14 e5 ♘d7 would have led to a position from the 3rd game. It is no better to play 14 ♖d1 ♖c8 (G.Kuzmin-Bagirov, Lvov Zonal 1978), or 14 a3 c5! (Illescas-Anand, Madrid 1993).

14...♖c8 15 ♖fd1 (later they tried 15 ♘d2, 15 a3 and 15 ♖ac1(d1), but in each case Black had no reason to complain about the opening) **15...c5!**

A typical undermining of the centre that frees Black's game.

16 dxc5 ♘g4 17 ♗d4 e5 18 h3 (already the only move; both 18 ♗xe5? ♖xc5 and 18 a3?! bxa3 19 ♖xa3 exd4 or 19 ♕b3 ♖b8! are bad for White) **18...exd4 19 hxg4 ♖xc5 20 ♕d2**



20...a5?!

Too slow. 20...♗c8! (immediately latching on to the g4-pawn) was more forceful, after which Keene gave 21 ♕f4 in *Informator*. But this is a dubious recommendation, since after 21...♕d7! it is not easy, if at all possible, for White to find a clear-cut way to equalise.

21 ♖ac1 (now the position is roughly equal) **21...♕d7?**

But this is a serious mistake: such a 'gain of tempo' by the attack on the g4-pawn, involving the conceding of the c-file, merely plays into White's hands. 21...♖xc1 22 ♖xc1 ♕d7 23 ♕f4 ♖c8 was better, with equality (Graf-Novikov, 58th USSR Championship, Moscow 1991) or the unclear 21...♖e8!?

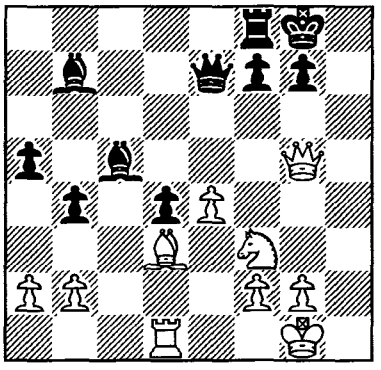
22 ♖xc5 ♗xc5 23 g5! (the weak g-pawn suddenly performs the role of a battering-ram: after its exchange for the h-pawn, the black king will feel uncomfortable) **23...hxg5**

23...h5?! 24 g6! fxg6 25 ♕g5 or 23...♕e6 24

♖c1! ♗b6 25 ♕f4 also leaves White with a dangerous initiative, while after 23...♕g4 24 gxh6 ♖e8 25 hxg7 ♔xg7 26 ♖c1 ♗b6 27 ♘h2 Black has no compensation for the pawn.

24 ♕xg5 ♕e7

If 24...♗b6, then 25 ♘e5 is unpleasant. Polugayevsky apparently thought that he would be able to parry White's threats on the h-file without much difficulty, but it all turns out far worse for him.



25 ♕h5!

Of course, Korchnoi did not even think of exchanging queens – 25 ♕xe7 ♗xe7 26 ♖c1 in pursuit of the d4-pawn, since after 26...♖c8 27 ♖xc8+ ♗xc8 28 ♘xd4 ♗f6 29 ♘c6 ♗d7 30 ♘xa5 ♗xb2 Black's two bishops compensate for the pawn.

25...g6

Allowing the white queen to go to h6, after which Black's position is probably no longer defensible. But 25...♕d6 would also not have solved his problems after 26 ♖e1!, for example: 26...♗b6 (26...a4 27 ♖c1! ♗b6 28 ♖c4) 27 e5 ♕h6 28 ♕xh6 gxh6 29 e6, or 26...♕b6 27 b3 ♗e7 28 ♗c4 with a powerful initiative.

26 ♕h6 (as often happens, direct threats prove pretty effective) **26...♕f6**

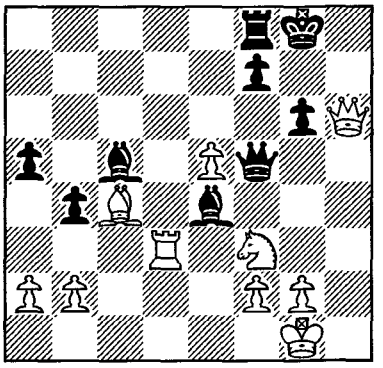
Black also faced difficulties after 26...♖e8 27 ♘g5 ♕f6 28 ♗c4! (achieving the ideal coordination of the pieces) 28...♖e7 – here 29 ♖d3! ♗xe4 (29...♕g7 30 ♕h4) 30 ♗xf7+ ♕xf7 31 ♘xf7 ♗xd3 32 ♕g5 is good, as is 29 e5! ♕g7 30 ♕h2! (threatening 31 e6) 30...♕xe5 31 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 32 ♕h6+ ♕g7 33 ♕h4 with a very strong attack (33...♕e5 34 ♗xg6).

27 ♗c4! d3 (27...♗xe4? 28 ♘g5; 27...♖e8 28 ♘g5 ♖e7 – cf. 26...♖e8) **28 e5 ♕f5**

28...♕g7 is no better: 29 ♕g5! ♗xf3 30 gxf3 ♗d4 31 f4 ♗xb2 32 ♖xd3 (Keene) 32...♖c8 33 e6! ♗f6 34 exf7+ ♔f8 35 ♕xa5 or 35 ♕b5 and wins.

29 ♖xd3 ♗e4

In time-trouble Polugayevsky considered this position still not altogether clear, but now comes a highly spectacular finish.



30 ♖d6! (a brilliant move: ♖f6 is threatened)

30...♕g4

The rook is taboo – 30...♗xd6 31 ♘g5, while if 30...♕h5, then 31 ♕xh5 gxh5 32 ♖d7 ♗xf3 33 gxf3 ♔g7 34 f4 ♔g6 35 ♗d3+ ♔h6 36 ♔g2 etc.

31 ♖f6 ♗f5 32 b3

Supporting the bishop at c4 and retaining decisive threats. Black's further resistance in time-trouble proves futile.

32...♗d4 33 ♘xd4

The simplest, although it was also possible to win by 33 ♖d6 ♗c5 34 ♘g5 ♕h5 35 ♗xf7+ ♖xf7 36 ♕xh5 gxh5 37 ♘xf7 ♗xd6 38 ♘xd6 ♗b1 39 ♘b7.

33...♕xd4 34 ♖xg6+! ♗xg6 35 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 36 ♕h6+ ♔g8 37 e6 (transposing into a won endgame with two extra pawns) **37...♕e4 38 exf7+ ♖xf7 39 ♕f6 ♕b1+ 40 ♔h2 ♕h7+ 41 ♔g3 ♕d3+ 42 f3 ♕xc4 43 ♕d8+ 1-0**

The score became 6-1 in Korchnoi's favour – almost like Fischer! But since they were due to play up to 16 games, the match continued. To Polugayevsky's credit, even with such a nightmarish score he did not lose heart and continued to fight: he won the 8th game and subsequently gained promising positions several times. But, as Bagirov sorrowfully explained, 'all the time he was lacking something: Korchnoi was as though bewitched!' And in the end he won 8½-4½ (+5–1=7).

This rout was also, of course, the result of Polugayevsky's psychological instability: he always found it difficult playing against Korchnoi. In many stages of the game he played very, very well, but at decisive moments he was not quite able to withstand the tension. And this 'not quite' was enough for Korchnoi to score an impressive victory! Most striking were his brilliant form and the sharp leap in his creative potential, incredible for a 45-year-old player. He himself was brief in his assessment of what happened: 'I was much stronger at the chessboard, my nerves again proved more robust, and the assistance of my seconds was more effective' (here he was talking about Raymond Keene, Michael Stean and Yakov Murey).

This match must have served as a warning signal to Karpov and his trainers: Korchnoi had never played with such energy, drive and invention! What was striking was the diversity of the creative methods he employed. But at the same time Korchnoi's propensity for complicated, non-standard endings revealed itself. His virtuoso handling of them enabled him to cope confidently with such an expert on opening theory and master of complicated play as Polugayevsky. It was also in endings that Korchnoi was able to set Karpov very serious problems at the finish of the marathon in Baguio...

Belgrade Revenge

A particular edge to the final Candidates match with Boris Spassky (Belgrade, winter 1977/78) was imparted by the fact that in the mid-1970s the ex-world champion had also been out of favour with the authorities. But then, in the words of Korchnoi, he achieved the seemingly impossible: 'Virtually the only one out of our millions of emigrants, he obtained dual citizenship and, while retaining his Soviet passport, he resettled in Paris! For several years Spassky fought for his political independence, but "by chance" he received permission to leave exactly a month after my flight from the USSR.'

Therefore in the eyes of the state officials, in contrast to the 'renegade' Korchnoi, Spassky remained a 'representative of the Soviet Chess School'. And they helped the newly-fledged Parisian, trying to protect Karpov against a new meeting with Korchnoi, and themselves against the threat of the Soviet Union again losing the chess crown. The play of the 'traitor' in the match with Polugayevsky caused some alarm. Although at that moment Karpov's dominating position appeared unshakable, Korchnoi's rise was just too rapid and unexpected. Suppose that within a year he were to improve still further and be able to fight with Karpov on equal terms? After all, at the finish of their 1974 match, despite his initial playing advantage, Karpov had found it hard to dispose of his persistent opponent. And now, when the latter had escaped from the grip of the Sports Committee and had assembled quite a good team of trainers, it was possible that things would be even more difficult...

I don't know to what extent all these off-the-board machinations affected Spassky's play, but the fact remains: despite the help of his long-standing trainer Igor Bondarevsky, the start of this exhausting match (the best of 20 games) was catastrophic for the ex-world champion. In the 1st game he was saved literally by a miracle: in his time-trouble haste Korchnoi 'just in case' made his 41st move – the only one that threw away the win!

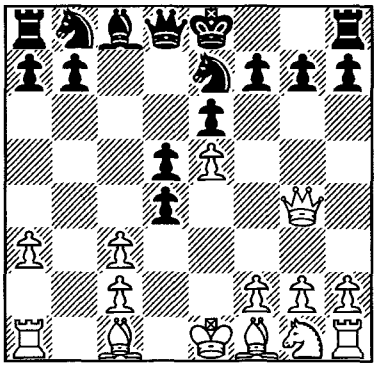
But in the 2nd game no miracle occurred.

Korchnoi chose a risky variation of his favourite French Defence – as it transpired, he was ready to play this not only against opponents inferior to him in class, but also at the very highest level. And Spassky failed to cope with the resulting complicated problems.

Game 27
B.Spassky-V.Korchnoi
Candidates Final Match,
Belgrade 1977, 2nd game
French Defence C18

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e5 c5 5 a3 ♗xc3+ 6 bxc3 ♘e7 7 ♕g4 (7 a4 – *Game Nos.12, 22 and 23*) **7...cxd4**

7...♕c7 (later Korchnoi preferred 7...0-0!) 8 ♕xg7 ♖g8 9 ♕xh7 cxd4 transposes, but here Black has to reckon with 8 ♗d2 (as played by Velimirovic) or Geller's old gambit idea 8 ♗d3!? cxd4 9 ♘e2.



8 ♕xg7

Now if 8 ♗d3 there is 8...♕a5! 9 ♘e2 ♘g6 (Tal-Bronstein, 32nd USSR Championship, Kiev 1964/65). On the other hand, 8 cxd4 ♕c7 9 ♔d1 is possible – the 12th game continued 9...0-0 (9...♘f5 10 ♘f3 ♘c6 11 ♗d3 ♘ce7 12 ♗d2 ♗d7 13 a4! and ♖a3, Spassky-Lutikov, Moscow 1960) 10 ♘f3 f6 11 ♗d3 ♘f5 12 ♕h3 ♘c6 13 g4 fxe5 14 dxe5 ♘xe5! with sharp, roughly equal play.

8...♖g8 9 ♕xh7 ♕c7

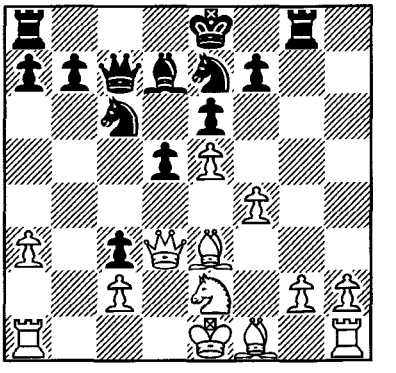
After the experimental 9...♕a5?! there could have followed 10 ♘e2 (Timman-Korchnoi, 5th matchgame, Leeuwarden 1976), or 10 ♖b1 ♘bc6 (Black fails to equalise with 10...♕xc3+ 11 ♗d2 ♕xa3 12 ♘f3!, or 11...♕c7 12 f4 ♘bc6 13 ♘f3 ♗d7 14 ♘g5! Alexander-Botvinnik, England-USSR match 1946) 11 ♘f3 ♗d7 12 ♖xb7 ♕xc3+ 13 ♔d1 ♘a5 14 ♖b4!... 1-0 (Short-Timman, Amsterdam 1988).

10 ♘e2 (10 ♔d1 – *Game No.14*) **10...♘bc6 11 f4 ♗d7**

At that time this move was made automatically, but later, not without the influence of the present game, they also began playing 11...dxc3!? 12 ♕d3 d4 13 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 14 ♕xd4 ♗d7, although after 15 ♖g1! ♘f5 16 ♕f2 White retains a definite advantage.

12 ♕d3 dxc3 (the main *tabiya* of the variation) **13 ♗e3**

A rare and unpromising reply: White does better first to eliminate the c3-pawn. In those years they mainly played 13 ♘xc3 a6 14 ♖b1 ♖c8 (or 14...♘a5, but not 14...0-0-0? 15 ♕xa6!) 15 h4! (15 ♗d2 ♘a5! Lilienthal-Levenfish, Moscow 1936) 15...♘f5 (15...♘a7?! 16 ♖h3 ♘b5 17 ♖b3 ♘f5 18 h5!) 16 ♖h3 ♘ce7 17 ♗d2 with advantage (Korchnoi-Nogueiras, Brussels 1988). But 13...♘f5!? 14 ♘b5 ♕d8 is more accurate, and so nowadays the most unpleasant move for Black is deemed to be 13 ♕xc3!



13...d4!?

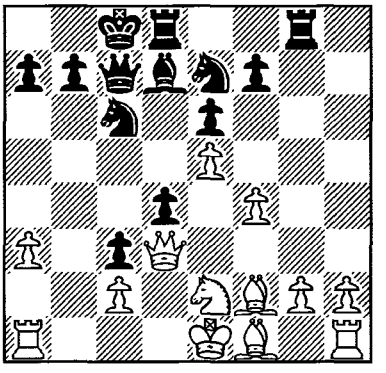
Again a novelty; moreover, this pawn sacri-

fice has become a typical one! Apart from Uhlmann's old move 13...♘f5, 13...0-0-0 is also in common use, and after 14 ♗f2 (14 g3 d4!) 14...d4 it leads to a position from the game.

14 ♗f2

This appears to lose a tempo, but Spassky wants to capture on d4 only after Black has castled queenside, in order to attack the a7-pawn. In the event of 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 Black also has active counterplay: 15 ♗xd4 ♘d5 16 g3 ♗c6 17 ♖g1 (17 ♗e2 ♘xf4!) 17...0-0-0, or 15 ♕xd4 ♘f5 16 ♕c5 ♕c6! 17 0-0-0 (17 ♖d1? ♕e4!) 17...♕b6! 18 ♕xb6 axb6 19 ♗xb6 ♖xa3 20 ♔b1 ♖a4 with an excellent endgame.

14...0-0-0

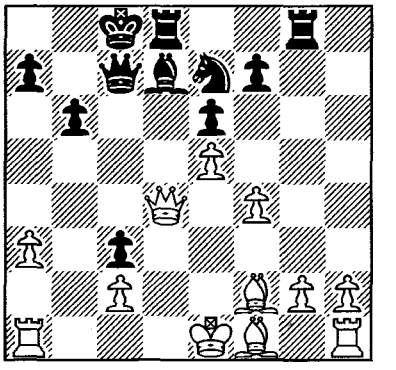


15 ♘xd4

Later 15 g3 occurred many times, but here, apart from the sound 15...♘f5 16 ♗g2 ♘ce7 (Bronstein-Schmidt, Copenhagen 1991) or 15...♘g6 16 ♕c4 (16 ♗g2 ♘cxe5!) 16...f6! (Rytshagov-Djurhuus, Asker 1997) Black can play the 'Tal-style' 15...♘xe5!? 16 fxe5 ♗c6 17 ♖g1 ♖g4!, also picking up the e5-pawn and obtaining serious compensation for the piece.

15...♘xd4 16 ♕xd4 b6

As is usual in this variation, a highly non-standard situation has arisen. The fact that it is good for Black is indicated even by the sharp variation 16...♗c6!? 17 ♕xa7 ♖d2 18 ♗b6 ♕b8 (Keene) 19 ♕a5 ♖xc2 20 ♗c5 ♘d5 21 ♗d6 b6 22 ♕a6+ ♕b7 23 ♕d3 ♖d2 etc. However, Korchnoi does not see the sense in immediately launching into unclear complications, and he retains enduring positional compensation for the pawn, thanks to the chronic weakness of the white king.



17 ♗h4 (if 17 ♕d3 ♗c6 18 ♕xc3, then 18...♘d5 or 18...♖g4) **17...♗b5 18 ♕e4 ♗xf1**

18...♗c6 came into consideration, and if 19 ♕c4 ♔b7 20 ♕xc3, then 20...♖g4! with the initiative.

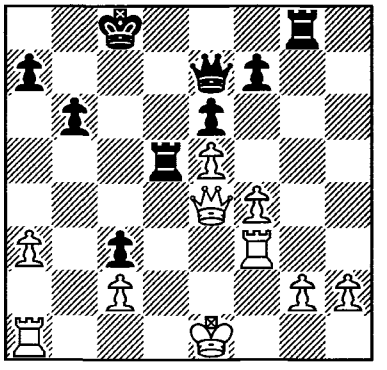
19 ♖xf1

Keene condemned this move and recommended 19 ♕a8+ ♔d7! 20 0-0-0+ ♘d5 21 ♖xd5+ exd5 22 ♕xd5+ ♔c8 23 ♕a8+ with perpetual check. But after 20...♔e8! 21 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 22 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 23 ♖xf1 ♖xg2 24 ♖h1 ♔e8 25 ♗xe7 (otherwise ♘f5!) 25...♔xe7 26 h4 ♔f8 a rook endgame is reached, where White faces a depressing struggle for a draw in view of his numerous pawn weaknesses. 20 ♖d1+! is more accurate, and since 20...♔e8? 21 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 22 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 23 ♔xf1 is now in favour of White, there only remains 20...♘d5 21 ♖xd5+ with the same perpetual check.

However, the move in the game also does not deserve to be criticised: for the moment White maintains the balance and, moreover, he hopes gradually to repel the attack, hide his king behind his kingside pawns and then, in the endgame, advance his passed h-pawn with decisive effect. But, as was said long ago by

Tarrasch, before the endgame the gods have created the middlegame! And Korchnoi correctly judged that, with the queens on, Black's threats to the king are quite serious.

19...♖d5! 20 ♗xe7 (20 ♗f6? ♕c6! 21 ♕f3 ♘f5) **20...♕xe7 21 ♖f3**



21...♔b8!

'Inviting White to treat himself to another pawn,' writes grandmaster Alexei Kuzmin. 'Heavy piece endings are sometimes called the fourth stage of the chess game: this is a tribute to the great number of problems that arise in them. We have here a brilliant illustration on the theme of a combined attack in such positions.'

22 ♔f1?!

But this is a serious inaccuracy. Of course, 22 ♖xc3? would have lost to 22...♕h4+, but after 22 g3! it is Black who would have had to seek a worthy reply. Keene recommended 22...♖d2 23 ♖xc3 ♖gd8 with an exclamation mark and a '=' evaluation. But after 24 h4 White has a clear advantage (24...♖h2?! 25 ♖d1!). In my opinion, it is better to play 22...♕c5! 23 ♕e3 (23 ♔f1? ♖d2) 23...♖d4 24 ♕xc3 ♖c4 25 ♕e3 ♕c6 with a guaranteed draw: 26 ♕d3 ♖d4! 27 ♕xd4 ♕xf3 28 ♖d1 ♕h1+ 29 ♔d2 ♕xh2+ 30 ♔c1 ♕xg3 etc.

22...♖d2!

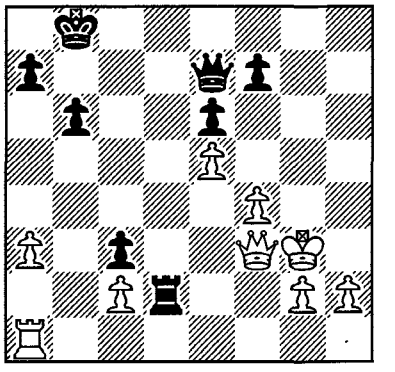
Now this invasion, creating threats both to the king, and to the c2-pawn, forces the exchange of one pair of rooks and enables Black to develop a dangerous initiative.

23 ♖f2

After 23 g3? ♕c5 (23...♖xh2 24 ♖xc3 ♕d7! 25 ♖d3 ♕b5 is also possible) 24 ♕b4 (not 24 h4? ♖xg3) 24...♕d5 25 ♕d6+ ♕xd6 26 exd6 ♖xh2 White has a very difficult endgame.

23...♖gd8 24 ♕f3 (after 24 ♖xd2? both 24...♖xd2 and 24...cxd2 are strong) **24...♖xf2+ 25 ♔xf2 ♖d2+ 26 ♔g3**

The king has not in fact acquired a quiet shelter: 26 ♔f1? is hopeless in view of 26...♕c5 27 ♖d1 (A.Kuzmin) 27...♕c4+ 28 ♔e1 ♕d4 29 ♖xd2 ♕xd2+ 30 ♔f1 ♕xc2.



26...♕d8!

An excellent move, forcing the opponent to solve new problems. Perhaps Spassky had been counting on 26...♖xc2 27 ♖d1! (Keene's recommendation 27 ♕d3? is bad on account of 27...♖d2 28 ♕xc3 ♕d8! with the decisive threats of ...♖d3+ and ...♕g8+, for example: 29 ♕c6 ♕g8+ 30 ♔h3 ♕h7+ 31 ♔g3 ♕g6+ 32 ♔h3 ♖d8! 33 g4 ♕h7+ 34 ♔g3 ♖d3+) 27...♕f8 28 ♕c6!, and after 28...♖d2 (what else?) 29 ♖xd2 cxd2 30 ♕d7 ♕xa3+ 31 ♔f2! ♕c5+ 32 ♔e2 ♕c4+ 33 ♔e3 White would have parried the attack and gained a draw.

27 ♕e4 (the c2-pawn!) **27...♕g8+ 28 ♔h3 ♕h8+ 29 ♔g3 ♕g7+ 30 ♔h3 ♖d8** (provoking another weakening) **31 g4**

The only move: if 31 g3? Black would have won with the unexpected 31...♕h8+ 32 ♔g4 ♖g8+ 33 ♔f3 ♕xh2.

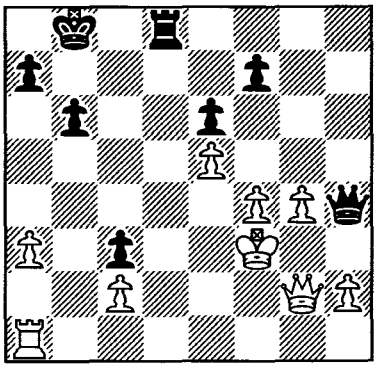
31...♖h8+ 32 ♔g3 ♕h6 33 ♕g2

The attack along the h-file forces White to

move his queen from the centre. For the moment he is unable to consolidate his forces, bring his inactive rook into the game or at least threaten perpetual check with his queen.

33...♕h4+ 34 ♔f3 ♖d8

The culminating point of this very complicated and tense game. The issue is decided in a time scramble, literally within the course of two moves.



35 ♕g3?

By urgently activating his rook with 35 ♖f1! (A.Kuzmin), White would nevertheless have held the position, for example: 35...♖d2 36 ♖f2 ♕d8 37 ♔g3 ♖xc2! 38 ♖xc2 ♕d3+ 39 ♔h4 ♕h7+ with perpetual check. Nothing better for Black is apparent, and this is not surprising: all the white pieces are in play!

35...♕e7?!

An error in reply, which makes the win very difficult. Although, in such a tense situation, with just minutes left on the clock, it was not easy to find the strongest continuation.

Only 35...♕h7! would have fully emphasised the drawbacks to 35 ♕g3: the c2-pawn is attacked, and after 36 f5 ♖d2 so is the h2-pawn. After 37 h4 Black has two strong replies: 37...♖xc2 38 ♖d1 (38 ♔e3 ♖d2!) 38...♕h6, when with material level he has a powerful attack and a passed pawn, and the more complicated 37...exf5 38 e6+ ♔b7 39 e7 fxg4+ 40 ♕xg4 f5 41 ♕g5 ♕f7 42 ♔g3 ♕e6! (but not 42...♖e2 43 ♖f1! ♕d5 44 ♖f2), and in view of the exposed position of his king, White probably has no defence.

36 g5?

The fatal mistake. In attempting to create a loophole for his king, Spassky misses the last chance to solve the problem of his rook at a1 – 36 ♖e1! (Keene) 36...♕b7+ 37 ♔e3 ♖d2 38 ♖e2 ♕d5 39 ♕f2. And although after 39...♖d1 Black would have retained pressure (the annoying rook cannot be driven away: 40 ♖e1? ♖d4 41 ♕f3 ♕c5 and wins), White would still have had considerable defensive resources.

36...♖d2 (now Black is winning) **37 ♔g4 ♕b7 38 ♕xc3** (eliminating the dangerous pawn, which is unstoppable after 38 ♖g1 ♕e4 and ...♕xc2) **38...♖g2+ 39 ♔h3 ♖f2! 40 ♔g4 ♕e4 0-1**

Decisive loss of material is inevitable.

The effect of this win was so strong, that in the next four even-numbered games, where the French Defence was again tested, Spassky avoided 7 ♕g4 in favour of the positional variation with 7 ♘f3. And only in the 12th game, when his opponent was then leading by a large margin and the fate of the match was almost decided, did he again venture the sharp queen sortie.

Spassky's uncertainty also displayed itself in the 3rd game, where again, as in the 1st and the 5th, there was a discussion in the English Opening with 1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 e6 6 g3. In a slightly inferior position, he suddenly captured a 'poisoned' pawn with his queen on the 27th move, allowing a strong counter by his opponent. Black lost material and soon capitulated.

Perturbed by the undesirable development of events, the Sports Committee leaders decided that the root of the problem lay in... Bondarevsky's lack of knowledge of modern theory. Two of the world champion's agents were present at the match – his chief trainer Semion Furman and the correspondent of *Sovetsky Sport* and *64* Alexander Roshal, who in the autumn of 2005 disclosed to me for the

first time what happened during those days in Belgrade:

'Eleven years earlier Furman had undergone a serious operation, and now the after-effects of the terrible illness were returning. Apparently fearful for his health, at some moment he did not want to live in a single room and asked whether I would object if we shared a double room. "Why should there be any problem?" I asked in surprise. And then, after some hesitation, Semion Abramovich anxiously informed me that the Sports Committee authorities were pressing him to help Spassky. "What can I do? They'll make things very difficult for me if I refuse!"

'Furman very much didn't want to help anyone against Korchnoi, with whom he had worked a great deal in pre-Karpov times (however, Korchnoi still reckons that Furman had been "spying" on him since 1972). And I said to him: "What are you are afraid of? There's Karpov!" But the modest Furman felt shy about phoning him. So then I phoned Karpov: for instructions as to what Furman should say to the authorities. And Semion Abramovich replied to the deputy chairman of the Sports Committee, who had arrived in Belgrade: "Karpov forbids it, because I am his second and if I start helping Spassky, I will reveal Karpov's secrets."

'And Furman was promptly left in peace. But this whole episode cost the impressionable Semion a lot of nerves and several sleepless nights. He became very unwell and I summoned the embassy doctor, who immediately decided: "He should be sent home straight away." And Furman was taken back. Three months later he died... I am sure that this stress aggravated his illness and hastened his end.'

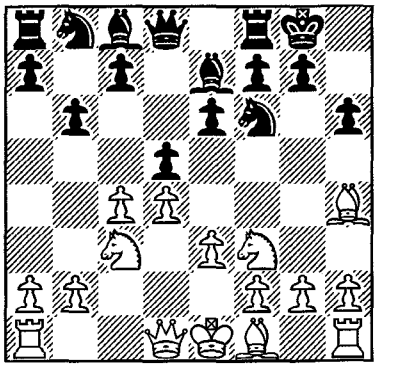
At the cost of enormous effort Spassky tried to change the match situation, but the next three games – the 4th, 5th and 6th – ended in draws, and the 7th, to his misfortune, became one of the best creative achievements in Korchnoi's career.

Game 28

V.Korchnoi-B.Spassky

Candidates Final Match,
Belgrade 1977, 7th game
Queen's Gambit D58

1 c4 e6 (avoiding 1...c5 for the first time in the match) **2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 ♗e7 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♗g5 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4 b6**



The reliable Tartakower-Makogonov-Bondarevsky Variation, which featured in the opening repertoire of not only the 10th world champion, but also the 12th and the 13th.

8 ♖c1

This waiting move, along with 8 ♗e2 and 8 ♕c2, has replaced the one-time main line 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 10 ♘xd5 exd5 followed by 11...♗e6! and 12...c5 with equality (*Volume 4, Game No.103*).

8...♗b7 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 b4 (an attempt to constrict Black's queenside)

11...c6?!

11...c5 12 bxc5 bxc5 is more energetic, for example: 13 ♕b3 ♗c6!, 13 ♗b5 ♘a6!, or 13 dxc5 ♘d7 14 ♘b5 ♖c8! However, Spassky was aiming for ...a7-a5, and if b4-b5, only then ...c6-c5.

12 ♗e2

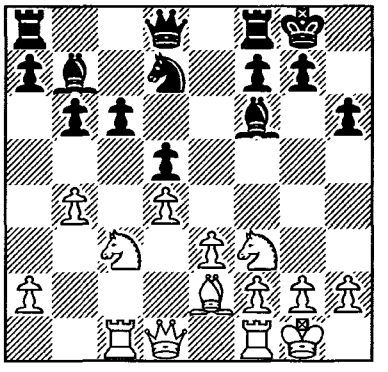
In the 11th game Korchnoi employed an original plan – 12 ♗d3! ♖e8 13 0-0 ♘d7 14 ♕b3 ♘f8 15 ♖fd1 ♖c8 16 ♗b1 ♘e6 17 a4 (17 a3!?) 17...♗a8 18 ♗a2 with the idea of b4-

b5 or e3-e4, but subsequently Spassky was able to outplay his opponent and gain the first of his four wins in a desperate match situation (cf. *Volume 3, pp.323-325*).

12...♘d7

Soon afterwards 12...♕d6 was deemed more accurate, for example: 13 ♕b3 ♘d7 14 0-0 a5 15 a3 ♖fe8 16 ♖fd1 ♗e7 (or immediately 16...axb4 17 axb4 b5 and ...♘b6) 17 ♖b1 (Browne-Hort, Reykjavik 1978) 17...axb4! 18 axb4 ♖a7 and ...♖ea8 with a comfortable game for Black.

13 0-0



13...a5

'A sharp move. Obviously 13...b5 did not appeal to Black because of 14 a4 a6 15 a5 ♗e7 16 ♖b1, and White will soon play his knight from f3 to c5. The quiet continuation 13...♖e8 14 ♕b3 ♘f8 also seemed to my opponent to be not altogether satisfactory, in view of 15 b5. If White is allowed to exchange on c6, then the d5-pawn will be weak, while after 15...c5 16 dxc5 bxc5 17 ♖fd1 ♗xc3 18 ♕xc3 ♘e6 an unclear position arises, with, it would appear, roughly equal chances, but it too did not greatly appeal to Spassky.' (Korchnoi)

14 b5 (14 a3 axb4, and Black has the a-file) **14...c5 15 dxc5!**

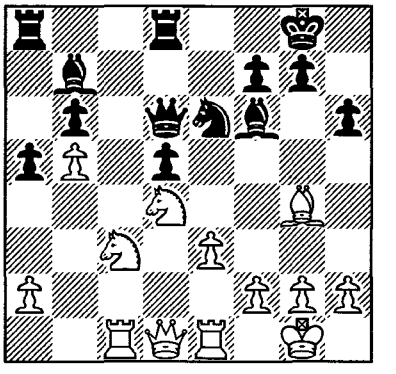
White tries, in a rather unusual way, to exploit the weakness of the c6-square. Stean recommended 15 ♖e1 c4 16 ♘d2 with the idea of ♗f3 and ♘f1-g3-e2-f4. But Black is not obliged to play ...c5-c4; 15...♖c8! is better.

15...♘xc5 (the attempt 15...♗xc3? 16 ♖xc3 bxc5 does not work, since White interposes 16 c6!) **16 ♘d4 ♕d6 17 ♗g4!?**

The routine 17 ♗f3 ♖fd8 and ...♖ac8 would have led to a complicated struggle, where Black's two bishops would have compensated for the weakness of the isolated d5-pawn.

17...♖fd8 18 ♖e1 (with the sensible idea of ♖e2-d2) **18...♘e6**

An unforced retreat. The simple 18...g6 was possible, maintaining the dynamic balance. 'Another way to equalise would have been 18...♘e4. However, the move made by Spassky is more active: Black gains control of the strength, the pride of White's position – the d4-square.' (Korchnoi)



19 ♗xe6!? (if 19 ♘ce2, then 19...♖ac8 is now possible) **19...fxe6 20 ♘c6!**

The crux of White's interesting plan, which harbours numerous dangers for Black: his two bishops soon disappear from the board.

20...♗xc6

The correct practical decision. After 20...♖d7 (20...♖dc8? 21 ♘e4) Korchnoi was intending 21 ♘a4 (in *ChessBase*, Donev parries Stean's move 21 e4 by 21...♗g5!), but Black could have given up the b6-pawn: 21...♖c7! 22 ♘xb6 ♗xc6 23 bxc6 ♖a6 24 ♘d7 ♖axc6 25 ♘xf6+ gxf6 26 ♖xc6 ♕xc6 with an unclear game (Donev). 26 ♖b1! is stronger, with a slight but enduring advantage for White: Black's activity on the c-file is temporary,

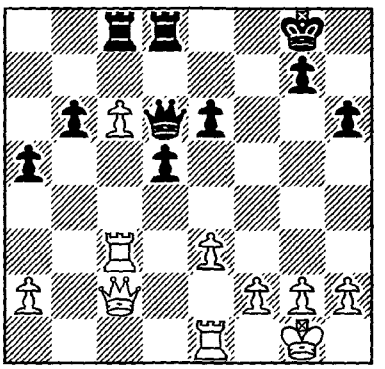
whereas the weakness of his pawns and the open position of his king are permanent factors! Understandably, Spassky did not want to go in for such a position: all the time he would have had to watch out for various threats.

21 bxc6 ♗xc3?!

After 21...♕b4?! White would have retained the initiative by 22 a3! ♕xa3 23 c7 ♖dc8 24 ♘b5 (Stean) 24...♕b4 25 ♖b1 ♕e7 26 e4 dxe4 27 ♖xe4. However, Black should have immediately extracted the thorn by 21...♕xc6 22 ♘e4 ♕b7! (but not 22...♕d7 23 ♘xf6+ gxf6 24 ♕d4! ♔g7 25 ♕xb6) 23 ♘xf6+ gxf6 24 ♕g4+ ♔f7, when he gains a draw with accurate play 25 ♕h5+ ♔g7 or 25 ♕f4 e5, and 26 ♕xh6? fails to 26...♖h8, trapping the queen.

'I had seen all this perfectly well when I made my 19th move,' writes Korchnoi, and he explains his choice by a psychological consideration: he sensed that his opponent would not be satisfied with a draw. Especially since in the variation 25 ♕f4 e5 (in my opinion, 25...♖ac8! 26 ♕xh6 ♖h8 27 ♕f4 ♖xc1 28 ♖xc1 ♖c8 is more solid, with equality) 26 ♕f5! Black still has to fight for it: 26...♔g7 (26...♖g8?! 27 f4! ♖ae8 28 ♖c2 and ♖ec1) 27 ♕g4+ ♔h8 (27...♔f7 28 f4!) 28 ♕e6 ♖f8 29 ♖c6 ♖ae8! 30 ♖xb6 ♖xe6 31 ♖xb7 ♖c8 etc.

22 ♖xc3 ♖ac8 23 ♕c2



Again, as in the 2nd game, a heavy piece ending has been reached, and again a very tense and unusual one! As a counter to the dangerous, far-advanced passed c-pawn, Black intends to create his own passed pawn on the d-file and hopes that in the end it will divert the white pieces from the c-file and lead to the mutual elimination of these pawns. It is interesting to follow how Korchnoi succeeds in avoiding this apparently obvious and inevitable development of events.

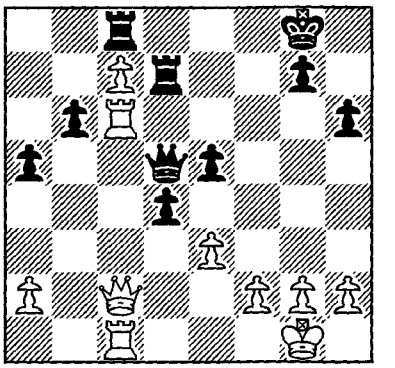
23...e5?

Spassky consistently carries out his plan, not seeing any particular danger in the appearance of the white pawn at c7. But he would have done better to blockade it in one of two ways:

1) 23...♕c7 24 ♕g6 ♖d6 25 ♖ec1 e5 (if 25...b5 White has the unpleasant 26 ♖c5 b4 27 e4!?) or 24 a4 ♖d6 25 ♖c1 e5 26 ♕d3(b3) and the c6-pawn continues to restrict Black's actions;

2) 23...♖c7 (Korchnoi) 24 ♖b1 ♖b8 25 ♖b5 e5 26 ♕b3 ♖xc6 27 ♖xc6 ♕xc6 28 ♖xd5 ♔h8 29 g3 with a slight but enduring advantage for White in view of the chronic weakness of the enemy pawns.

24 c7! ♖d7 25 ♖c1 d4 26 ♖c6 ♕d5



The white passed pawn is already at c7, b Black too does not have far to go: the mo ...d4-d3 will be made with gain of tempo. addition, the white king does not as yet h an escape square, and a further tempo have to be spent on creating one. On the b of general considerations, Spassky no do thought that he should be able to keep

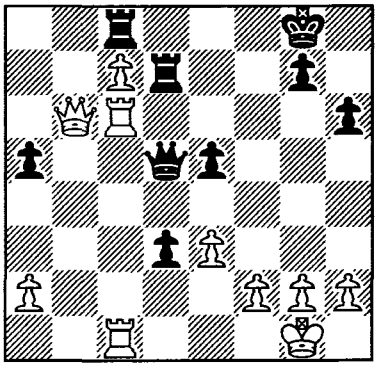
with his opponent in this race. But Korchnoi's intuitive evaluation proved deeper...

27 ♕b1! (of course, not 27 ♖xb6?? ♖dxc7)

27...d3

'If 27...b5, then 28 e4! ♕f7 29 ♕xb5 and after 27...dxe3 28 fxe3 b5 29 ♖b6 White is winning, since 29...♖dxc7 loses to 30 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 31 ♖b8+ and 32 ♕f5+.' (Korchnoi)

28 ♕xb6



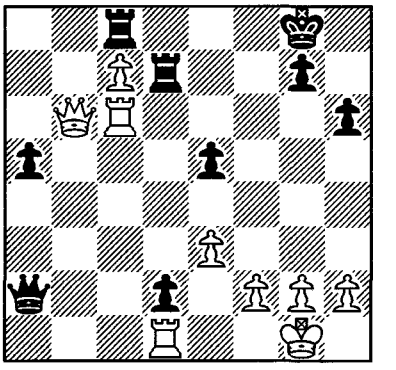
28...d2?!

It is hard to refrain from such a move – the pawn approaches the queening square with gain of tempo! But this would appear to be the decisive mistake: Black should not have blocked the 2nd rank. 28...♕xa2! was essential, and if 29 ♕b7, then 29...♖f8 (the threat of ...♕xf2+ enables a highly important tempo to be gained) 30 h3 ♕xf2+ 31 ♔h2 d2 32 ♖d1 ♕xe3 33 c8♕ ♖xb7 34 ♕xb7 ♕f4+ 35 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 36 ♔h2 ♕f4+ with perpetual check (Donev).

True, here too after 29 h3! White would have retained the advantage and chances of success: 29...♖f7 30 ♕a6 ♕xf2+ 31 ♔h2 ♕f5 (the queen has to return) 32 e4! ♕f4+ 33 ♔h1 ♖ff8 (33...♖fxc7? 34 ♕c4+ is bad for Black, as is 33...♖cxc7? 34 ♖xc7 d2 35 ♖(♕)c8+ etc.) 34 ♕xd3 ♔h7 35 ♕c4, and Black's trump (his d-pawn) has disappeared, whereas White's trump (his c-pawn) has remained. And although, with the queens and four rooks on the board, Black could still have hoped for counterplay involving the advance of the a-pawn, he would have faced a difficult struggle for a draw. We must once again applaud Korchnoi's far-sightedness!

29 ♖d1 ♕xa2

If 29...♕d3 White wins by 30 ♕b7 ♕e2 (30...♖f8 31 c8♕) 31 ♕xc8+ ♔h7 32 ♕h8+! (or 32 h3 ♕xd1+ 33 ♔h2 Korchnoi) 32...♔xh8 33 ♖xh6+! gxh6 34 c8♕+ ♔g7 35 ♕xd7+ and ♕xd2.



30 h3!!

A key kink in White's brilliant combination. 'A very important move! Black can no longer speculate on the weakness of White's back rank.' (Korchnoi)

It can be assumed that Spassky mainly considered 30 ♕b7?, when it is bad to play 30...♕a1? 31 ♕xc8+ ♔h7 32 ♕h8+! ♔xh8 33 ♖xh6+ gxh6 34 c8♕+ ♔g7 35 ♕xd7+ with crushing threats, but Black is saved by another version of the rook sacrifice – 30...♕a4!! 31 ♕xc8+ ♔h7 32 h3! (of course, not 32 ♕g8+? ♔xg8 33 c8♕+ ♔h7 34 ♖c2 ♕a1! and Black wins – Stean) 32...♕xc6 (32...♕xd1+? 33 ♔h2 and wins) 33 ♖xd2 ♕c1+ 34 ♔h2 ♕xd2 35 ♕b8 ♖xc7 36 ♕xc7 (Donev) with a drawn queen endgame.

It is easy to check that here White has nothing better. After the move in the game and Black's reply it appears that the position is almost the same, but... only 'almost'!

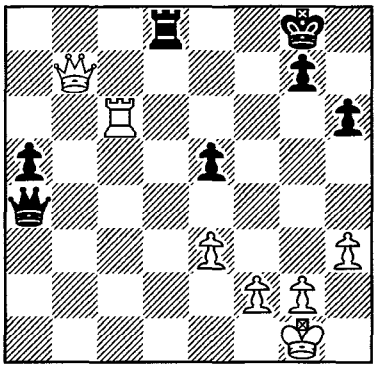
30...♕a4 31 ♖xd2! ♖xd2 32 ♕b7!

Another accurate move, which settles everything. Black is forced to bring back his rook

and go into a queen and rook ending, where he inevitably loses material because of the opponent's mating threats.

Stean recommended 32 ♕b8 ♖xb8 33 cxb8♕+ ♔h7 34 ♖c8 – to a human, White's threats seem very dangerous, but the machine is not afraid of its king being pursued: 34...♕d1+ 35 ♔h2 ♖xf2 36 ♖h8+ ♔g6 37 ♕e8+ ♖f7 38 ♕c6+ ♔f5. A decisive strengthening of the attack is not immediately apparent, but a careful study reveals that the black king has overstepped the boundary of acceptable risk – after 39 ♖e8! ♖f6 (there is nothing else) 40 ♕b7 ♕d6 (40...♔g6 41 ♖e7) 41 e4+ ♔g6 42 ♖e7 White nevertheless wins, although not without some adventures: 42...♔h5 43 ♕c8 g5 44 ♖g7 ♕e6 45 ♕c2.

32...♖dd8 33 cxd8♕+ ♖xd8



34 ♖c7!

'The attack continues!' writes Viktor Lvovich. ' "It would be interesting to know how far ahead Korchnoi calculated the variations!?" . Bent Larsen enviously exclaimed-cum-enquired in his comments on this game.' It turns out that Black can defend g7 only by giving up his e-pawn, after which his resistance is largely a formality.

34...♕a1+ 35 ♔h2 e4 36 ♕xe4 ♕f6 (36...a4 37 ♖a7 ♕b2 38 f4 or 37...a3 38 ♕e6+ ♔h7 39 ♕e7) **37 f4 ♕f8 38 ♖a7 ♕c5**

'Black could have offered a more tenacious resistance by 38...♖e8! 39 ♕d4 ♕f6, or 39 ♕d3 ♕c5, or 39 ♕f3 ♕f5.' (Korchnoi). But 39 ♕c6! ♔h7 (39...♖xe3? 40 ♖a8) 40 ♕c3 is better, when White wins.

39 ♕b7 ♕c3 40 ♕e7 ♖f8 41 e4! ♕d4 (41...♖xf4? 42 e5) **42 f5 h5** (42...♕c3 43 e5, while if 42...a4 White was intending 43 ♖d7 ♕f6 44 ♕xf6 ♖xf6 45 ♖a7 ♖b6 46 ♖xa4) **43 ♖xa5 ♕d2 44 ♕e5 ♕g5 45 ♖a6 ♖f7 46 ♖g6 ♕d8 47 f6 h4 48 fxg7 1-0**

A classic example of exploiting the power of a passed pawn.

In the next three games there was a no less fervent, fierce and open battle, affording a great deal of pleasure to the numerous Belgrade spectators.

In the 8th game, after errors by his opponent in time-trouble, Spassky seized the initiative in a sharp ending, but during the resumption, already in the second time scramble, he first lost his advantage, then on the 51st move he suddenly gave up a very important pawn, and as a result suffered a fourth defeat. The score became 6-2 in Korchnoi's favour. An enormous advantage, which fairly accurately reflected the relative strengths in the match.

Just imagine: 'plus five' after seven games with Polugayevsky and 'plus four' after eight games with Spassky! The Soviet sports authorities had something to think about: Korchnoi had become extremely dangerous. In the western press they increasingly often began calling him none other than Viktor the Terrible.

In the 9th game, which went 1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 f5 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 b3 b6 5 g3, it was Korchnoi who had the better endgame, and he tormented his opponent for a long time during the resumption, but Spassky nevertheless held out: a draw on the 71st move. But the 10th game turned into another drama for him: after at last gaining a clear advantage against the French Defence, he almost lost in time-trouble, conceded the initiative, and then literally crumbled during the resumption.

Starting with the 11th game, miraculous things began to happen. At a moment when

everyone thought that the rout was irreversible, Spassky suddenly gained a new lease of life – and Korchnoi suffered four successive defeats! A unique instance in his battle for the crown (not counting his tournament failure in rounds 14-17 in Curaçao), and in general in the history of matches at that level. His lead was reduced to the minimum: 7½-6½.

Soviet chess fans were perplexed: what was happening with Korchnoi? The papers reported certain conflicts, and a brief comment in *64* read: 'After Spassky had won the 11th, 12th and 13th games, Korchnoi categorically demanded that all the remaining games should be played in a closed room, without any spectators, or that the match should be moved to another country, threatening in the event of refusal to pull out of the match... In accordance with the rules, the chief arbiter B.Kazic informed Korchnoi that his demand could not be met. To put pressure on the arbiters and the organisers, Korchnoi made a statement that he was refusing to play and was leaving Belgrade. Then he said that he wanted to call a press conference in Zürich, at which he would report on his further intentions. However, after a few hours Korchnoi announced that he would nevertheless continue the match. The next game, the 14th, took place on 2nd January (since on 30th December play had been postponed because of Korchnoi, this was counted as his second time-out) and ended in a new win for Spassky.'

And it was only years later that Korchnoi revealed in his book *Antichess* what had happened then at the match: 'My helpers and I noticed an increase in the activity of the Soviets. First one, and then another Soviet grandmaster appeared in Belgrade, and Ivonin, the main director of chess and deputy chairman of the USSR Sports Committee, also arrived at the match, and scurrying about in the hall were officials from the Soviet embassy in Belgrade, people with attaché cases – their Soviet origin was unquestionable. Some kind of weapon was being employed against me – this was clear to me, but everything around, including Spassky's behaviour, was mysterious and sombre. During the second half of the match Spassky did not sit at the board on the stage. When he made his way to the board to make a move, he was swaying, with half-closed eyes, like a medium...'

Which provoked a protest by Korchnoi. It was affecting his nerves – sitting alone at the board, not seeing his opponent, who in addition was playing as though under hypnosis: 'He did not look normal. Although, of course, during matches for the world championship all sorts of devilry takes place...'

However, Spassky does not see anything reprehensible in this manner of play: 'This idea occurred to me during my match with Fischer. I was oppressed by remaining in public view for a long time, I lost concentration and found it hard to force myself to focus. It was the same in Belgrade.' According to the ex-champion, the first five rows were occupied by 'Korchnoi's people' *(or nevertheless Karpov's?! – G.K.)* and their visual pressure was so strong, that his brain ceased to function during the third hour of play. And Spassky demanded of the organisers a special box on the stage, where he sat both when it was his opponent to move, and when he was considering his own move.

But it was because of this that he and Korchnoi, as the latter expressed it, 'began the match on amicable terms, but ended it as enemies' (many years later these passions, naturally, died down, although other disagreements arose). There can be no doubt that for the Soviet side the match in Belgrade was a kind of testing ground before the main battle with the disagreeable challenger: they studied his habits and his reactions to external irritants – this know-how later came in useful in Baguio...

Fortunately for him and 'to the surprise of many', Korchnoi managed to withstand these terrible blows, endure the psychological stress and 'escape from my fatal dive'.

He made a couple of draws, and then in a very tense struggle won the 17th and 18th games and worthily concluded this 'strange' match: 10½-7½ (+7–4=7). What resulted was a symbiosis of Korchnoi's two preceding match battles: both a fierce battle of nerves (as with Petrosian) and a demonstration of his wealth of ideas and eagerness for a struggle (as with Polugayevsky).

Thus, more than nine years later Korchnoi gained a convincing revenge against Spassky for his defeat in the final Candidates match of 1968. It is curious that in this same series, only at the quarter-final stage, Portisch also gained revenge on Larsen for 1968 (true, in the semi-final he nevertheless lost to Spassky). The reasons for these revenges, albeit with a certain delay, are fully comparable: both Spassky and Larsen had already passed the peaks of their careers, whereas their opponents, thanks to enormous research work, were still continuing to improve.

Whereas in 1968 Spassky was very much on the rise, he skilfully posed the most unpleasant problems and Korchnoi was unable to withstand the tension created by his opponent, in 1977 the roles were reversed. Certainly, the ex-world champion still retained enormous practical strength, but this was not sufficient to halt Korchnoi, sharply improving in all aspects of the game, who happily went in for any complications, and was ready to play the middlegame, and the endgame, and better and even inferior positions.

And so, the 1977 Candidates series concluded in a triumph for the defector. Korchnoi earned the right to play a second match with Karpov, this time outside the USSR.

Baguio through the Eyes of Korchnoi

After Fischer's departure it appeared unlikely that anyone would successfully be able to oppose Karpov in the next match for the world championship: the young champion was improving literally tournament by tournament. And after all, it is only matches between equal opponents, when there is a fierce clash of different conceptions and styles, that draw widespread attention and become landmarks in the development of the game. Fortunately for chess, one of the grandmasters of the older generation – Korchnoi – was able to raise his creative potential and prepare many interesting ideas for his duel with Karpov, and above all – retain his freshness of thinking and fighting spirit.

Therefore the match in the Filipino resort of Baguio (July-October 1978), which the general public mainly remembers, alas, for its political intrigue and constant sequence of scandals, was hugely successful from the standpoint of chess skill. And I should like to talk about it twice (as in Volume 1 with the Capablanca-Alekhine match): first from the viewpoint of the loser, and then in the eyes of the winner. The main emphasis will be placed on an analysis of the chess content, and of the numerous off-the-board events, which were widely covered in the press, I will only single out those which, in my view, had a significant influence on the competitive course of the match.

For this and the next two matches for the world crown, regulations, which were shackling for the challenger – play to six wins without counting draws, and a return match in the event of the champion losing – had been adopted with the participation of Karpov at a meeting of the FIDE Central Committee in Caracas (October 1977). 'Supposedly under pressure, the Soviets agreed that the match for the world championship would be not of 24 games (as previously), but unlimited. But in return they secured for themselves all the remaining privileges!' writes Korchnoi. His indignation is understandable: return matches had been abolished back in the early 1960s, and besides, to play an unlimited match and, in the event of winning, an unlimited return match, was in fact an incredible burden for the challenger, who had already gone through a

difficult qualification process.

Also unusual was the choice of venue. Baguio is 250 kilometres from the Filipino capital Manila at a height of 1500 metres above sea level, At times the town disappeared in a thick mist: the match was held in the season of rain, typhoons and storms. Landslides also occurred, and interruptions with the electricity supply... And yet FIDE had also received offers from European towns! Why was it that Baguio became the venue for a world championship match? The reply to this question must be sought from its organiser – the extremely energetic and endlessly cunning Florencio Campomanes, who had dreamed of staging the Fischer-Karpov match and was an intermediary in their negotiations (cf. the chapter 'Abdication' in Volume 4). In Baguio he curried favour with the Soviet officials and Karpov, assisting the champion in every way, although, as the match organiser, he should have remained neutral. Four years later, as a reward, Campo was to receive the decisive votes of the Soviet Bloc countries in the elections for the FIDE President...

For a proper understanding of the prematch situation, it must be remembered that Korchnoi's wife and son were still in the USSR, having been denied an exit visa (later his son was even arrested and imprisoned for two and a half years 'for avoiding army service'). In the spring of 1978 he had appealed to the FIDE President Max Euwe, asking him to help his family to leave, in order to 'secure equal conditions in the match with Karpov'. But here FIDE was powerless.

Korchnoi: 'The members of my family became hostages, who had to pay for my escape.' Before flying to the match he made one more attempt – he published an open letter to Brezhnev with a request that he should 'display goodwill' and allow his family to leave the USSR. In Manila he handed the letter to the Soviet embassy and again read out its text at a press conference. But this was a voice crying in the wilderness: Korchnoi's family was released only after the match in Merano, in the summer of 1982.

The challenger's staff consisted of five persons, and the champion's fourteen. 'I was psychologically prepared for a harsh struggle, but nevertheless the arrival of such a huge detachment plunged me into depression,' Korchnoi admitted. Although, the number of purely chess helpers was equal: Korchnoi had Keene, Stean and Murey, whereas Karpov had Balashov, Zaitsev and Tal (only from the 29th game were they joined by Vasyukov). Looking ahead, I should mention that the challenger's team was inferior to the Soviet team in rating, experience and knowledge, but, thanks to Korchnoi's incredible energy and his ability to work for many hours at a stretch, it maintained a definite parity in the analysis of adjourned positions (with the exception, perhaps, of a couple of instances), and at the finish of the marathon it was altogether equal to the occasion.

On the opening day of the match, 12th July, the head of the Soviet delegation, Colonel Viktor Baturinsky, 'on the instructions of the champion', publicly stated that Karpov was agreeable to shaking hands before a game (this point in the rules, suggested by Korchnoi, also contained this condition: 'if one of the contestants no longer intends to do this, he must inform the arbiter beforehand') and that he did not object to his opponent using a special chair, but he demanded that it be checked... by X-ray. Which was in fact done – exactly as with Fischer's chair at the match in Reykjavik (cf. the chapter 'Battle of the Gods' in Volume 4).

At the first meeting of the appeal jury the question was discussed as to whether Korchnoi had the right to play under the Swiss flag. The leader of his delegation, Petra Leeuwerik (later Korchnoi's wife; at the end of the Second World War she had been arrested by Soviet security officials in Vienna and had spent ten years in Stalin's camps), presented a written authorisation by the Swiss

Chess Federation, but Baturinsky insisted that the challenger could only play under a flag with the inscription 'stateless'. And he got his way! True, after a protest by Korchnoi a compromise was found: large flags of FIDE, the Philippines and the USSR were arranged on the stage, but on the playing table there were no flags at all. And yet Korchnoi is correct, when he writes: 'Henceforth, I was deprived not only of a flag, but of legal parity as well.'

The challenger decided to play wearing mirrored glasses, and not at all because of the bright southern sun. The aim was simple: to deprive Karpov of his favourite occupation – standing at the board, staring straight at his opponent. While I was wearing these glasses, all he could admire was his own reflection.'

The first four games of the match ended in draws, although in the 3rd game Korchnoi had a dangerous attack, but he did not find the strongest continuation and lost his advantage. But in the middle of the 2nd game another reason for conflict occurred: Karpov's helpers handed him a drink, which resembled a fruit yoghurt. Korchnoi made a protest: by the FIDE rules any contact between a player and the auditorium was forbidden. Baturinsky made an ironic reply, and on the instigation of the champion's press attaché Alexander Roshal the Soviets christened this protest 'a storm in a yoghurt cup'. But to avoid any suggestion of prompting, the chief arbiter Lothar Schmid requested that the drink should be handed to Karpov at one and the same time.

This strange 'yoghurt', which, according to Karpov, could have one of two shades, 'depending on the amount of acidity in the glass', also disturbed Korchnoi: 'It was interesting to observe how they surreptitiously carried the drink around for a couple of hours, and then gave it to Karpov, who leaped up from his seat and demolished it. I noticed that after his "yoghurt", Karpov would often start playing with the speed of a machine-gun! It wouldn't have been a bad thing to take away this "yoghurt" for chemical analysis...' Well, when one of the participants in a world championship match is deprived of equal rights and is under constant pressure, any deviation from the norm can unsettle him and begin to seem dangerous and suspicious. Later, as we will see, psychological attacks on the part of the Soviet team were highly effective.

From the 4th game onwards, when Dr Euwe was no longer in Baguio (the FIDE representative left at the match was Campomanes!), a place not far from the stage was occupied by a 'strange creature' – the subsequently famous Dr Zukhar. 'He stared hard at me, trying to attract my attention,' writes Korchnoi. 'His connection with Karpov was indisputable. He sat without moving for the entire five hours – even a robot would have envied his powers of concentration! – but whenever it was Karpov's turn to move, he simply froze. You could actually feel the colossal thought-work going on inside this man!' Korchnoi demanded that he should be moved, Baturinsky refused, and from then on the battle 'for' and 'against' Zukhar became the main off-the-board intrigue of the match.

In the meantime the 5th game took place. This was undoubtedly the most interesting of those played at the start and is important for understanding the logic of matchplay.

Game 29

V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov

World Championship Match,
Baguio 1978, 5th game
Nimzo-Indian Defence E42

1 c4 ♘f6 2 d4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 (in the 7th and 17th games 4...0-0 5 ♗d3 occurred – *Game No.76*) **5 ♘e2!?**

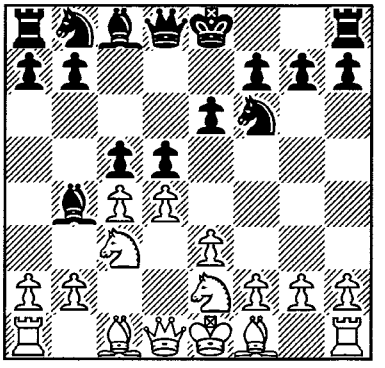
The old Rubinstein Variation, revived at that time by Korchnoi, who demonstrated the dangers awaiting Black. It is because of the reply 5 ♘e2 that 4...c5 has practically gone out of use nowadays.

5...d5

The 3rd game went 5...cxd4 6 exd4 d5

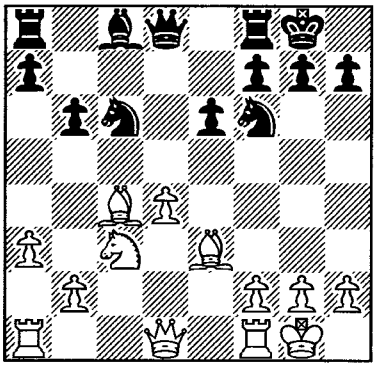
(6...♘e4 7 a3! Korchnoi-Timman, Las Palmas 1981) 7 c5 ♘e4 8 ♗d2 (8 g3!? Korchnoi-Sakaev, St Petersburg 1997) 8...♘xd2 9 ♕xd2 a5 (other plans are 9...b6 10 a3 ♗xc3 11 ♘xc3 bxc5 12 dxc5 a5 13 ♗b5+ ♗d7 14 0-0 0-0 15 b4 Reshevsky-Najdorf, Dallas 1957; 9...♘c6 10 a3! Korchnoi-Spassky, 41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973; 9...♕f6 10 a3! Korchnoi-Stanek, Pula 1997) 10 a3 ♗xc3 11 ♘xc3 with a slight but enduing advantage for White, as was confirmed in the game Korchnoi-Seirawan (Bad Kissingen 1981).

The alternative is 6...0-0 7 a3 ♗e7, when White has a choice between the aggressive 8 d5 exd5 9 cxd5 ♖e8 (9...♗c5 10 b4 ♗b6 11 ♘a4 Torre-Karpov, London 1984) 10 d6!? (in the early 1980s both 10 g3 and 10 ♗e3 were tried) 10...♗f8 11 g3 ♖e6 (11...♕b6?! 12 ♗g2 ♗xd6 13 ♗e3 Korchnoi-Miles, Wijk aan Zee 1984) 12 ♗f4! (12 ♗g2 ♖xd6 is unclear, Gligoric-Karpov, Bugojno 1980) 12...♘h5 13 ♗e3 (Korchnoi-Kindermann, Beersheva 1984) and the quiet 8 g3, as Korchnoi played against A.Greenfeld (Beersheva 1997) and H.Olafsson (Reykjavik 2000), or 8 ♘f4!? d5 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♘cxd5 exd5 11 ♗d3 ♘c6 12 0-0!, and again White has a slight but enduring advantage (Kramnik-Leko, 9th matchgame, Budapest rapidplay 2001).



6 a3 ♗xc3+ 7 ♘xc3 cxd4 8 exd4 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♘c6 10 ♗e3 0-0 11 0-0 b6

Since White, who as compensation for his 'isolani' has the advantage of the two bishops, is intending to attack on the kingside, Black must take secure control of the d5-square.



12 ♕d3

Later it was established that 12 ♕f3! ♗b7 13 ♗d3 sets Black more serious problems, for example:

1) 13...♕d7 (13...♖b8 14 ♕g3! Beliavsky-Andersson, Bugojno 1984) 14 ♕h3 ♘e7 15 ♗g5! (15 ♖ad1 is less energetic, Sadler-Karpov, Monaco rapidplay 1998) 17...♘g6 16 ♗xf6 gxf6, and now not 17 d5 ♗xd5 18 ♖ad1 ♕c7! with sharp play (instead of 18...♖ad8?! 19 ♗e4! Vaganian-A.Petrosian, Telavi 1982), but 17 ♖ad1! ♖ad8 18 ♖fe1 or 18 ♗e4, and Black's position is worse on account of the weakness of his pawns and the constant threat of d4-d5;

2) 13...♖c8 14 ♖ad1 ♖c7 15 ♕h3 ♘e7 16 ♗g5 ♘g6 17 ♕g3 ♖d7 18 d5! (Kasparov-Psakhis, 6th matchgame, Murcia 1990), or 14...h6 15 ♕g3 ♔h8 16 ♕h3 ♘g8?! 17 d5! (Korchnoi-Vyzhmanavin, Moscow rapidplay 1994), and in both cases the central breakthrough secured White a powerful initiative.

12...♗b7 13 ♖ad1 h6

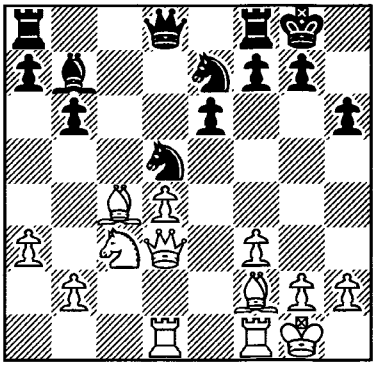
'A useful prophylactic move, forestalling the threat of ♗g5. However, it has the drawback of weakening the b1-h7 diagonal, and it is towards the exploitation of this weakness that White's subsequent actions are aimed.' (Averbakh)

14 f3!?

'A relatively new idea, which had already

occurred in games of English masters: White prepares to switch his bishop to h4 or g3.' (Averbakh). I should also mention 14 ♗f4 ♘e7 15 ♖fe1 ♘fd5 16 ♗g3 ♘g6 17 f3 ♖c8 18 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 19 ♗a6 ♖a8 20 ♖c1 h5 21 ♔f2 ♕f6 22 ♕e3 ♖fe8 23 ♗e5 ½-½ (Korchnoi-C.Hansen, Biel 1992).

14...♘e7 15 ♗f2 ♘fd5



'The strong d5-square ensures Black quite good prospects.' (Tal). '15...♕d7 came into consideration, and if 16 ♗a2, then 16...♖fc8 17 ♗b1 ♘g6 18 h4 ♘d5 with an equal game.' (Averbakh)

It would appear that Korchnoi was aiming not so much for an opening advantage, as for a complicated manoeuvring struggle in a position where the balance was somewhat disturbed. In the given instance the conflict is as though predetermined: the 'isolani' and the two bishops against the powerful outpost at d5 – which will prevail?

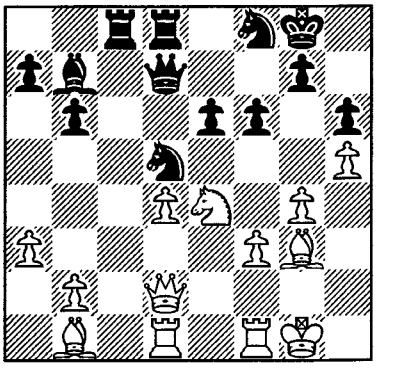
16 ♗a2 ♘f4

Here too Averbakh prefers 16...♕d7. 'After 16...♘f5 Black would have to reckon with 17 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 18 ♗b1, which all the same would have forced ...g7-g6 sooner or later. The world champion is not in a hurry to complete his development and he provokes his opponent into advancing his kingside pawns, reckoning that the weakening of White's position may tell sooner or later.' (Tal)

17 ♕d2 ♘fg6 18 ♗b1 ♕d7 19 h4! (the only way of fighting for the initiative) **19...♖fd8 20 h5 ♘f8 21 ♗h4 f6**

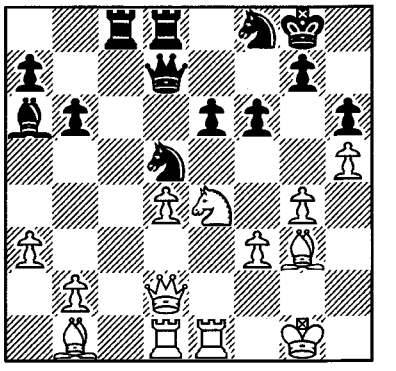
Black is forced to create a weakness at e6, but his position remains very solid.

22 ♘e4 (threatening ♗xf6) **22...♘d5** (according to Tal, 'a forced and at the same time useful move, consolidating the position') **23 g4 ♖ac8 24 ♗g3**



White has hardly made much progress with his attack, and yet, by advancing his kingside pawns, Korchnoi has created certain problems for his opponent. And although, with the queens on the board, the exposure of the white king looks dangerous, the two bishops suppress Black's counterplay, attacking his defences from a distance, and the threat of setting up the ♕d3 and ♗b1 battery ties the knight to the f8-square.

24...♗a6 25 ♖fe1



25...♖c6

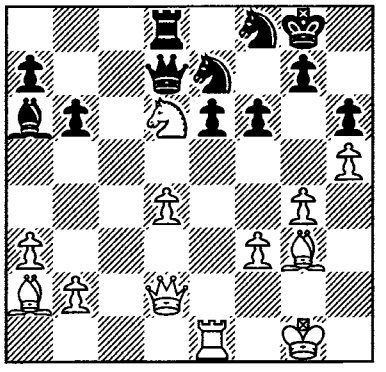
'A continuation of the intended plan. The

sharp 25...f5?! would have been fully justified after 26 ♘d6 f4 *(26...♖c6! – G.K.)*. However, in the event of 26 ♘f2! the white knight would have switched to a favourable position.' (Tal)

26 ♖c1 ♘e7

An attempt to put pressure on the d4-pawn. 26...♗b7 is met by 27 ♗c2 (with the threat of ♗a4), and if 27...f5 28 ♘f2. However, Tal and Averbakh thought that 26...♗b5!? was more accurate.

27 ♖xc6 ♕xc6 (27...♘xc6 28 ♘d6 was worse for Black, since if 28...♕c7 there is 29 ♕f4) **28 ♗a2 ♕d7 29 ♘d6**



29...♗b7

Tal thought that 'Karpov's decision to part with his light-squared bishop is the only correct one, since 29...♘d5 30 ♗xd5 exd5 31 ♕e3 is unfavourable for Black, while after the natural 29...♘c8 there is a spectacular combination – 30 ♖xe6! (but not 30 d5? ♘xd6 31 dxe6 ♕e7 32 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 33 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 34 e7+ ♔h7 35 e8♕ ♕g3+) 30...♘xe6 31 ♕e3 ♔f8 32 ♗xe6 ♕e7 33 ♘f5 with dangerous threats.' More precisely – with a win: 33...♕e8 34 ♗e1! and ♗b4+.

Averbakh indicated the correct reply – 32...♕a4!, but added that 'after 33 ♘f5! White has a very strong attack'. However, if this variation is continued – 33...♕d1+!, it transpires that the two sides' chances are equal: 34 ♔h2 ♕c2+ (and not 35 ♔h3? on account of 35...♗f1+ 36 ♔h4 ♕g2), 34 ♗e1 ♗d3! (and 35 ♗xc8? ♖e8 36 ♗e6 ♗c4 is bad for White), or 34 ♕e1 ♖xd4! 35 ♘xd4 ♕xd4+ 36 ♕f2 ♕d1+ 37 ♔g2 ♘e7 38 ♗f4 ♗e2.

30 ♘f5 also did not achieve its aim in view of 30...♔h8, and if 31 ♘h4 ♘e7 32 ♗f2 ♗b7, while 31 ♘e3(xh6) ♕xd4 32 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 leads to simplification and a probable draw. Thus 29...♘c8!? would have made things easier for Black, but Karpov may not have liked the sharp variations that arise here: suppose White's attack should turn out to be decisive?!

30 ♘xb7 ♕xb7 31 ♕e3 ♔h8 (in Averbakh's opinion, serious consideration should have been given to 31...♘d5 32 ♕e4 ♕c6, not conceding the c-file) **32 ♖c1!**

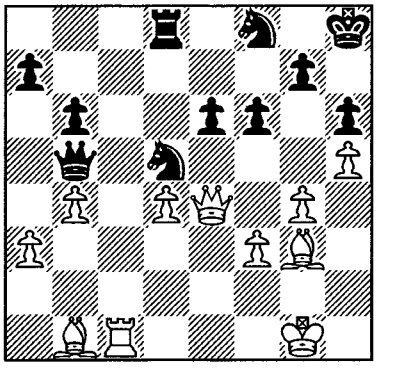
Of course, not 32 ♗xe6?! ♘xe6 33 ♕xe6 ♕xf3 with equality.

32...♘d5 33 ♕e4 ♕d7 (33...♖c8!?) **34 ♗b1 ♕b5**

'On finding himself in a difficult position, Karpov resourcefully seeks counter-chances. For the moment he provokes a weakening of White's queenside.' (Tal)

35 b4

The trappy 35 ♗d6? would have been parried by 35...♕xb2 (35...♖xd6?? 36 ♕h7+! ♘xh7 37 ♖c8+ and mate) 36 ♖c6 ♘c3 37 ♖xc3 ♕xc3 38 ♗xf8 f5 39 gxf5 ♖xd4 or 38...♕xd4+ 39 ♕xd4 ♖xd4 etc.



35...♕d7?!

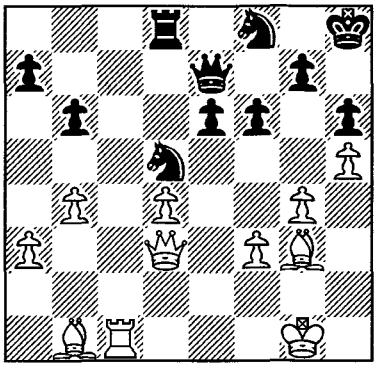
'Black returns his queen to the defence. Here Velimirovic recommended 35...a5, but then 36 ♗d6! is possible, and after, for exam-

ple, 36...f5 *(36...♖xd6?? 37 ♕h7+! – G.K.)* 37 gxf5 ♘f6 38 ♕e5 the complications are in favour of White.' (Averbakh)

Even so, Karpov was wrong not to decide on the active move 35...a5!, undermining the opponent's queenside. After 36 ♗d6 he has the simple reply 36...♔g8!, and if 37 ♗xf8 ♔xf8, then 38 ♕h7? is bad in view of 38...♕e2! 39 ♕h8+ ♔e7 40 ♕xg7+ ♔d6 with a decisive counterattack, while 38 ♕xe6 ♘f4 39 ♕c4 ♕g5 40 ♗a2(g6) ♘d5 leads to complicated play, where White's king is too exposed and Black will always find saving checks.

36 ♕d3 ♕e7

Now ...a7-a5 can be met by b4-b5, when the white rook acquires a new invasion square – c6.



37 ♔f2 f5!?

'Taking account of the opponent's imminent time-trouble, Karpov abruptly sharpens the play,' Tal writes. 'Passive play would have been unpromising.' Indeed, after 37...♕d7 38 b5 Black has a difficult position: the bishops are clearly stronger than the knights, and White can constantly threaten the advantageous exchange of queens.

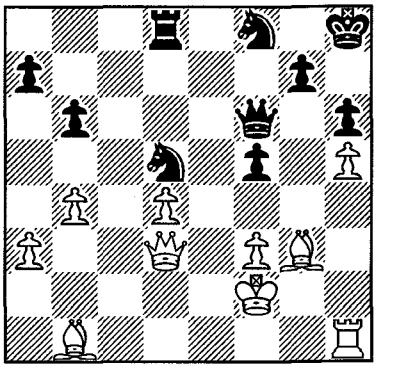
With the move played Black breaks up the enemy pawn chain and opens up the game, obtaining definite counter-chances associated with the exposed position of the white king. Queen and knight, and especially two knights, are a powerful force! However, White also acquires some trumps, such as the e5-square for his bishop. But the main thing is that, in search of a way to save the game, Karpov sharply changes the character of the play, which is especially unpleasant when the opponent is in time-trouble.

38 gxf5 exf5 39 ♖e1 ♕f6 (before the time control move – a little trap!) **40 ♗e5**

As was pointed out by many commentators, the tempting 40 ♖e5? f4 41 ♖f5 fxg3+ 42 ♔g1 would have lost to 42...♘f4! 43 ♕e4 ♖xd4 44 ♖xf6 ♖d1+.

40...♕h4+ 41 ♗g3 ♕f6 42 ♖h1!

'After repeating moves to gain time on the clock, White continues playing for a win. It has to be admitted that he has sufficient grounds for this.' (Tal)

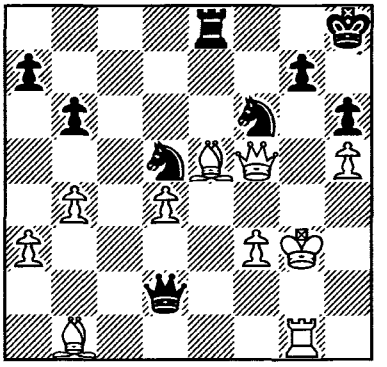


42...♘h7!

The sealed move. 'The game was adjourned in a difficult position for Karpov. Even now I find it hard to understand how it happened that neither my seconds, nor the grandmaster journalists, nor I myself saw Karpov's sealed move. The move was indeed strong, and at the board I had to spend some forty minutes outlining a plan. Soon after the resumption I ended up in severe time-trouble.' (Korchnoi)

'As it later transpired, the Korchnoi camp had mainly considered 42...♘e6 and 42...♕g5.' (Tal). But 42...♘e6? is weak in view of 43 ♗e5 ♘df4 44 ♕xf5 and wins, while 42...♕g5 43 ♗h4 ♕xh5 (43...♘f4 44 ♕f1) 44 ♕xf5 ♕xf5 45 ♗xf5 (Averbakh) 45...♖e8 46 ♗g3 leads to an endgame that is difficult for Black.

43 ♗e5 ♕g5 44 ♕xf5 ♕d2+ 45 ♔g3 ♘hf6 46 ♖g1 ♖e8?!



It is hard to say how deep and accurate the adjournment analysis was, since 46...♕e3! 47 ♖g2 (47 ♔h2 ♕f2+) 47...♕xa3 (47...♘e7 48 ♕d3!, aiming for the exchange of queens) 48 b5 ♕b4 would have given Black a far more defensible position than in the game.

47 ♗e4!

This move took Korchnoi nearly all of his remaining time. If 47 ♔h3? Karpov was intending 47...♖xe5! 48 dxe5 ♘f4+ 49 ♔g3 ♘4xh5+ 50 ♔h3 ♘f4+ with a draw.

47...♘e7 (47...♕e3 48 ♔g2!) **48 ♕h3 ♖c8**

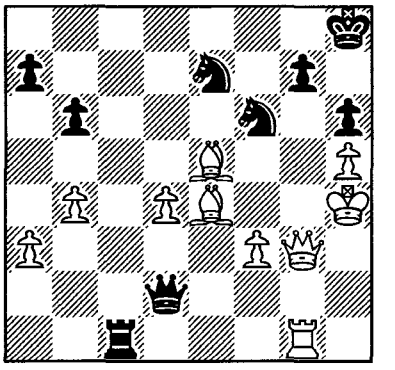
'Despite the material equality, the endgame after 48...♖f8 49 ♖g2 ♘xe4+ 50 ♔h2! ♘g5 51 ♖xd2 ♘xh3 52 ♔xh3 ♖xf3+ 53 ♔g4 is unfavourable for Black.' (Tal). White can also consider 49 ♔h4!? ♕a2 50 ♗xf6 ♖xf6 51 ♕g3 ♕g8 52 ♕e5 ♕f8 53 ♔h3 and wins.

'The attempt to win a pawn – 48...♕g5+ 49 ♔h2 ♕xh5 would have led to a difficult ending for Black after 50 ♕xh5 ♘xh5 51 ♖c1. The world champion also strives to activate his rook.' (Averbakh). The next eight moves to the time control were made at blitz speed by both players.

49 ♔h4 ♖c1 50 ♕g3

'50 ♕g2, exchanging queens, came into consideration.' (Averbakh). This is putting it mildly! With 50 ♕g2! White would have achieved a won endgame: 50...♕xg2 (regarding 50...♕g5+?, cf. the note to the next move) 51 ♖xg2 ♖h1+ (51...♖a1 52 ♖c2!) 52 ♖h2 ♘xe4 53 fxe4 (simpler than 53 ♖xh1 ♘f2! 54 ♔g3! ♘xh1+ 55 ♔g2) 53...♖e1 54 ♔g4 ♖xe4+ 55 ♔f3 ♖e1 56 ♖g2 ♘f5 57 ♔f4 ♖f1+ 58 ♔e4 ♔g8 59 d5 ♔f7 60 d6 etc.

Now, however, neither the queens, nor the rooks are exchanged, and Black retains hopes of saving the game. But this is not yet the last grimace of time-trouble...



50...♖xg1

'The attempt to win the exchange – 50...♕g5+? 51 ♕xg5 hxg5+ 52 ♖xg5 ♖h1+ 53 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 54 ♔f4 ♘fd5+ 55 ♗xd5 ♘xd5+ 56 ♔f5 ♘e7+ would have lost to 57 ♔e6 ♖xg5 58 ♔xe7 ♖xh5 59 f4, when the d-pawn cannot be stopped.' (Tal)

51 ♕xg1 ♔g8?! (51...♕a2 was more tenacious) **52 ♕g3?!**

Tal makes no comment at this point, while Averbakh merely remarks that 'if 52 ♗xf6 there is the reply 52...♕f4+.' However, after 53 ♔h3 ♕xf6 54 ♕g4! White has a great advantage (54...♕xd4? 55 ♗h7+). In addition, 52 d5 was very strong, since this pawn is taboo: 52...♘exd5? 53 ♗xd5+ ♕xd5 54 ♗xf6.

52...♔f7

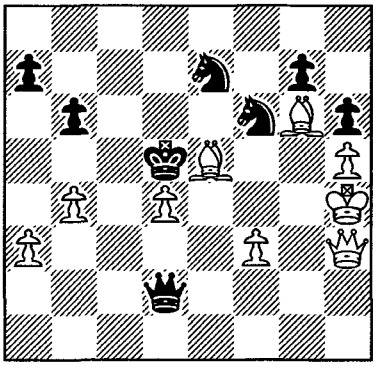
'52...♔f8 was necessary, although even after this Black's position would have remained anxious.' (Tal). Thus after 53 ♗xf6 gxf6 54 d5 f5 55 d6 fxe4 56 dxe7+ ♔xe7 57 ♕c7+ White reaches a queen ending with good winning chances.

53 ♗g6+ ♔e6??

Unexpectedly blundering into a mate in a

few moves. If 53...♘xg6+?! 54 ♕xg6+ ♔f8(g8) 55 ♕g3! ♔f7 56 ♗xf6 (56 b5 ♕c1!?) 56...gxf6 57 ♕c7+ ♔e6 58 ♕c6+ ♔e7 59 ♕d5 Black has a difficult queen endgame, but after 53...♔f8 he would have retained counter-chances in view of the open position of the white king (if 54 ♔h3, then 54...♕c1).

54 ♕h3+ ♔d5

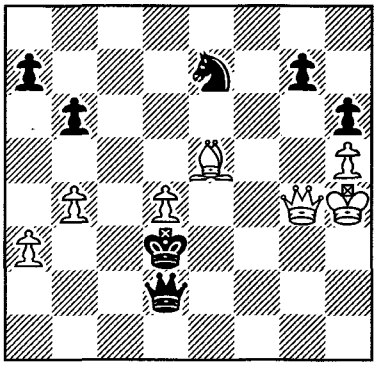


55 ♗e4+??

With his flag about to fall, Korchnoi overlooks a forced mate, which would have enabled him to open the score in the match: 55 ♗f7+ ♔c6 56 ♕e6+ ♔b7 57 ♕xe7+ etc.

55...♘xe4 56 fxe4+ ♔xe4 (the second time control was reached) **57 ♕g4+ ♔d3**

'Here Korchnoi thought for 40 minutes. The active placing of all Black's pieces allows him to hope for a draw.' (Tal)



58 ♕f3+

In Tal's opinion, 58 d5 was more dangerous, after which Black's 'only' way to save the game was 58...g5+ 59 hxg6 ♕e1+ 60 ♕g3+ ♕xg3+ 61 ♗xg3 ♘xg6+ 62 ♔h5 ♘f8, neutralising the d-pawn (say, 63 ♔xh6 ♔c4 64 ♔g7 ♘d7 65 d6 a5 66 bxa5 bxa5 67 ♔f7 ♔d5 68 ♔e7 ♔c6 69 a4 ♘b6 70 ♔e6 ♘d7). But Averbakh indicates a second way: 58...♕e1+ 59 ♕g3+ ♕xg3+ 60 ♔xg3 ♘xd5 61 ♗xg7 ♔e4 62 ♗xh6 ♘f6 63 ♔h4 ♔d3! 'and by giving up his knight for the h5-pawn, Black transposes into roughly the same ending as in the game.'

58...♕e3

As was pointed out by the commentators, 58...♔c4 would also have led to a draw with the queens on: 59 ♕f7+ ♔d3 60 ♕xe7 ♕e1+ with perpetual check. It is also possible to play 59...♘d5 60 ♗xg7 ♕g5+ or 60 ♕xg7 ♕e1+ 61 ♕g3 ♕e4+ etc.

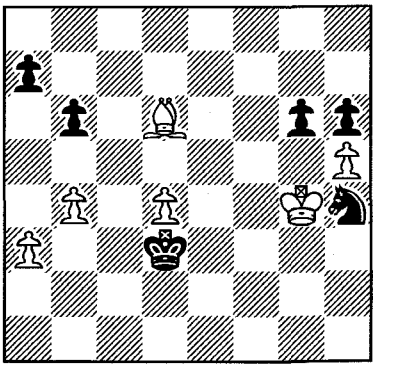
59 ♔g4

59 ♕xe3+ ♔xe3 was no better, for example: 60 ♔g4 ♔e4! 61 ♗xg7 ♘f5 62 ♗f8 ♘e3+ 63 ♔h3 ♘f5 with a draw (Averbakh), or 60 d5 g5+! 61 ♔g4 ♘xd5 62 ♗g7 ♔d3 63 ♗xh6 ♘f6+ 64 ♔xg5 ♘xh5 65 ♔xh5 ♔c4 66 ♗f8 ♔b3, eliminating the white pawns.

59...♕xf3+ 60 ♔xf3 g6 61 ♗d6 ♘f5?!

Karpov stumbles literally a step away from a draw: 61...gxh5! 62 ♗xe7 ♔xd4 and ...♔c4-b3. Now White succeeds in laying waste to the enemy kingside while retaining one of his pawns on the queenside.

62 ♔f4 ♘h4 (62...♘xd6? 63 hxg6 ♘e8 64 d5 and wins) **63 ♔g4**



63...gxh5+!

The knight has to be given up, since after 63...♘f5? 64 hxg6 ♘xd6 65 ♔f4 it again cannot stop the two passed pawns.

64 ♔xh4 ♔xd4 65 ♗b8

'Otherwise the draw is achieved very simply.' (Averbakh). 'A curious ending, in which Black has to be extremely careful.' (Tal)

65...a5 66 ♗d6 ♔c4 67 ♔xh5 a4 68 ♔xh6 ♔b3!

Forcing White to give up his good b-pawn and remain with his bad a3-pawn. Black would have lost after 68...b5? 69 ♔g5 ♔b3 70 ♔f5 ♔xa3 71 ♔e5 ♔b3 72 ♔d5 a3 73 ♔c5 a2 74 ♗e5.

69 b5 ♔c4 70 ♔g5 ♔xb5

A theoretically drawn endgame has been reached, where White has an extra bishop and a rook's pawn, where the queening square is of the wrong colour. The method for gaining a draw in such positions (with an a3-pawn against pawns at a4 and b5) was analysed in detail by grandmaster Averbakh in his endgame series first published in 1956.

71 ♔f5 ♔a6 72 ♔e6 ♔a7

'For the moment the black king does not abandon this corner. White would win if he were able to stalemate the king and thereby force the advance of the b-pawn. But he is not able to achieve this.' (Tal)

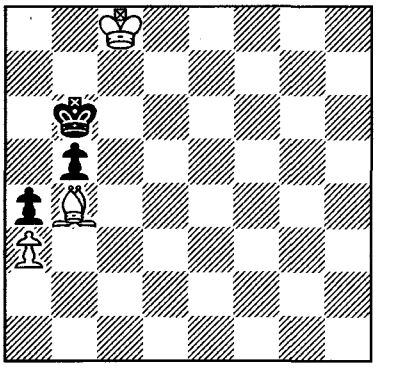
73 ♔d7 ♔b7 74 ♗e7 ♔a7 75 ♔c7 ♔a8 76 ♗d6 ♔a7 (76...b5? 77 ♗c5 and wins) **77 ♔c8 ♔a6**

But not 77...♔a8? 78 ♗b8 b5 79 ♔c7, forcing 79...b4 80 axb4 a3 81 b5 a2 82 b6 and 83 b7 mate. This winning method, pointed out of Horwitz (1885), was also given by Euwe in *Practische Schaaklessen* (1927). But generally speaking, this method of stalemating the king has been known since time immemorial.

78 ♔b8 b5

The last pawn move. 'Taking into account the fifty-move rule, there was a sigh of relief in the press centre: the game would conclude not later than the 128th move...' (Tal)

79 ♗b4 (parrying the threat of 79...b4 80 ♗xb4 ♔b6 with a draw) **79...♔b6 80 ♔c8**



80...♔c6!

'Only by moving away from the corner can Black save the game.' (Averbakh). After 80...♔a6? 81 ♔c7 ♔a7 82 ♗c5+ ♔a6 83 ♔c6 ♔a5 84 ♗e3 ♔a6 85 ♗b6 White wins.

81 ♔d8 ♔d5

'For more than forty moves White tries in vain to shake the well-known verdict of theory – draw! But at the same time Black must act very carefully: his king is constantly on the edge of the danger zone.' (Tal)

82 ♔e7 ♔e5 83 ♔f7 ♔d5 84 ♔f6 ♔d4 85 ♔e6 ♔e4 86 ♗f8 ♔d4 87 ♔d6 ♔e4 88 ♗g7 ♔f4 89 ♔e6 ♔f3 90 ♔e5 ♔g4 91 ♗f6 ♔h5

Here the game was adjourned for the second time and concluded only after the next game, the 6th (English Opening, draw on the 23rd move). Some care was still demanded of Karpov, and together with his trainers he no doubt refreshed his memory of the classical analyses, demonstrating that the black king cannot be driven away.

92 ♔f5 (the sealed move) **92...♔h6 93 ♗d4 ♔h7 94 ♔f6 ♔h6 95 ♗e3+ ♔h5 96 ♔f5 ♔h4 97 ♗d2 ♔g3 98 ♗g5 ♔f3 99 ♗f4 ♔g2 100 ♗d6 ♔f3 101 ♗h2 ♔g2 102 ♗c7 ♔f3 103 ♗d6 ♔e3 104 ♔e5 ♔f3 105 ♔d5 ♔g4 106 ♔c5 ♔f5 107 ♔xb5 ♔e6 108 ♔c6**

Of course, not 108 ♗h2 ♔d7 109 ♔xa4 ♔c6(8) and ...♔b7-a8 with a draw.

108...♔f6

A similar ending (with an a3-pawn against a pawn at a4) was analysed by Kling and Horwitz (1851), Berger (1921) and the Soviet theoretician Rauzer (1928), who introduced the rule of the drawing zone for the black king. And Karpov, following this rule, achieves a draw.

109 ♔d7 ♔g7 110 ♗e7 ♔g8 111 ♔e6 ♔g7 112 ♗c5 ♔g8 113 ♔f6 ♔h7 114 ♔f7 ♔h8 115 ♗d4+ ♔h7 116 ♗b2 ♔h6 117 ♔g8 ♔g6 118 ♗g7 ♔f5 119 ♔f7 ♔g5 120 ♗b2 ♔h6 121 ♗c1+ ♔h7 122 ♗d2 ♔h8 123 ♗c3+ ♔h7 124 ♗g7 ½-½

Stalemate! According to eye-witnesses, when the draw was finally recorded, Baturinsky exchanged kisses with Campomanes in front of everyone!

'At first I checked the accuracy of Karpov's defence in an ending that was difficult for him,' explains Korchnoi, 'and then, having established that he had learned his "homework" well, I allowed myself the pleasure of stalemating the world champion. Firstly, in this way I did not need to offer him a draw. And secondly, however natural stalemate is in a chess game, to be stalemated is slightly humiliating. Funny, but it's true! It is probable that after this Karpov considered himself somewhat insulted.'

At any event, Karpov did not stand up to shake hands before the start of the 7th game, and he did this 'with a reproachful smirk' only after his opponent had sat down. Korchnoi: 'Within a moment I also stood up... It is now clear to me that this was a subtly planned overture to the performance before the next game.'

But the 7th, in his view, became the first of numerous extraordinary games in this match. The challenger gained an obvious advantage from the opening, and won the exchange (cf. the note to Black's 8th move in *Game No.76*), but roughly from the 27th move the play of both contestants began to be affected by the imminent time scramble. And by something else! 'Fearing the Soviet psychologist, I played this game from a shelter – I sat mainly not on the stage, but in the rest room in front of a monitor,' writes Korchnoi. 'Only when Karpov made his move did I unwillingly come to the board, not wishing to repeat Spassky's behaviour in his match with me. Not being used to this – normally I sit at the board for almost the full five hours – I played far from my best.'

The adjourned position already seemed hopeless for Korchnoi, but together with Murey he found a not altogether easy way to draw. The following day the champion merely looked at his opponent's obvious sealed move – and immediately offered a draw. Which provoked new suspicions in the challenger's camp. 'Why didn't Karpov bother to check our home analysis? Is it possible that he knew it before the start of the resumption?!'

Another unpleasant surprise awaited Korchnoi in the 8th game. Before the start of it, as usual, he offered his hand to his opponent, but the latter suddenly replied that he would no longer shake hands with him, 'because he was behaving indecently'. The astonished Korchnoi turned to Schmid who was standing alongside: 'Do you understand what is happening?' (according to the rules, Karpov was obliged to warn the arbiter beforehand). The arbiter confusedly muttered that this could have been expected – and started the clocks. Korchnoi was beside himself: 'What a blatant, perfidious violation of the agreement! The shot hit home: I played like a child.'

In addition there also followed an opening surprise: **1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 ♘bd2!?** (instead of the customary 9 c3 ♗c5 – *Game Nos.35 and 75*) **9...♘c5 10 c3,** and after 40 minutes'(!) thought Korchnoi made the 'secondary' move **10...g6?!** The 10th game went 10...d4 11 ♘g5!? – Igor Zaitsev's remarkable novelty (*Volume 2, Game No.118*), and Black gained a

draw only with difficulty. The reply 10...g6 came as a surprise to Karpov, but he found a strong pawn sacrifice: **11 ♕e2 ♗g7 12 ♘d4! ♘xe5?! 13 f4 ♘c4 14 f5 gxf5 15 ♘xf5**, and Black resigned as early as the 28th move. 'Karpov conducted the attack quite well. In a first category tournament such a game would have been judged quite highly.' (Korchnoi)

However, the champion was unable to build on his success. After two draws the challenger levelled the scores in the 11th game, after employing a rare set-up: **1 g3 c5 2 ♗g2 ♘c6 3 e4 g6 4 d3 ♗g7 5 f4 d6 6 ♘f3 ♘f6 7 0-0 0-0 8 c3** etc. On the 26th move Black blundered and on the 51st he resigned. 'I had a reasonable position, but suddenly an inexplicable decline set in... Yes, days occur when apathy sets in, and then everything seems to go wrong.' (Karpov)

Korchnoi comments: 'Perhaps Karpov is hinting at the fact that his poor psychologist, after agreeing to be moved back to the 7th row, was unable to help the champion? Or at something else in the same field? The point is that for the 11th game my psychologist V.Berginer arrived, and, unrecognised by anyone, he calmly took his place in the 5th row... The opponent did not repeat his mistake again. Breaking the verbal gentlemen's agreement, from the next game Zukhar again sat in the 4th row. My psychologist was identified and, using their vast numerical superiority in the auditorium, they smothered him "with care and attention". He was no longer able to work effectively. It became clear to me that in this situation Berginer was powerless, and he departed after the 14th game.'

In the 12th game Korchnoi held out in a somewhat inferior endgame. And the 13th game, in his opinion, could have become one of the best of the match, but alas... An account of this dramatic game and the following one, the 14th, is given in the chapter on Karpov (*Game Nos.74 and 75*). After gaining two successive wins, the champion finally moved into a commanding lead: 3-1. Korchnoi: 'From that moment the Soviets, aided by Campomanes, introduced a system of police surveillance in the hall. Every spectator had to show a means of identity when buying a ticket. A close watch was kept on any "suspicious" persons. In order that Zukhar should not be distracted, he was always surrounded by his own men.'

Storm clouds hovered over Baguio for the whole of August: the appeal jury was constantly meeting – there was an exchange of forceful and lengthy statements between the delegations of the warring sides regarding the refusal to shake hands, the role of Dr Zukhar (who is he: a psychologist or a parapsychologist?), the 'anti-Soviet propaganda' on the part of Frau Leeuwerik, her right to represent Switzerland, and so on. The atmosphere was ultra-heated!

During the 15th game Karpov 'introduced a new type of weapon into the battle': he began rocking his chair. Korchnoi: 'A convenient chair: while the opponent is thinking over his move, one can sit there and rock! I walked away from the board, adopted a "Spassky-like pose", and began studying the position on the demonstration board.' When Schmid made a comment to Karpov, the latter replied: "This disturbs him, but I am disturbed by his glasses." Within some fifteen minutes the rocking ceased: the position had become drawish...' A draw was also concluded in the 16th game, where the French Defence occurred for the first time in the match.

The 17th game was a tragic one for Korchnoi. When he arrived, he summoned Campomanes and demanded that Zukhar be moved back to the 7th row. 'But the jury decided...' Campo was about to reply. 'Move him within ten minutes, or I'll deal with him myself!' declared Korchnoi, shaking his fists. 'Campomanes began fussing about and gathered the Soviets around him. Karpov arrived. On seeing that that my clock was running, he smirked and went off to his rest room. It was

nothing to do with him! As if he had not been the one to lose his temper when Schmid tried to expel Zukhar from the hall during the 9th game!'

Soon the challenger's demand was met: Campomanes cleared the front six rows of spectators, and Zukhar ended up in the 7th (incidentally, that day some thirty-odd Soviet tourists were also present at the game). 'This modest victory did not come easily,' writes Korchnoi. 'I wasted a mass of energy and eleven minutes of precious time! Is it possible to play a serious, intense game after expending so much nervous energy? It proved to be difficult. Karpov was completely outplayed, but then... Then I began to make blunders, and first I missed an obvious win, and finally, in time-trouble, I contrived to fall into a ridiculous mate in a drawn position!' (*Game No.76*).

The score became 4-1 in Karpov's favour, and the outcome of the match seemed decided. Korchnoi: 'I was in a terrible state. I claimed my last two time-outs and together with Frau Leeuwerik I went to Manila, to at least relax a little and come to.' In Manila he gave a press conference, at which he disclosed that the 'pact of the Soviets with Campomanes' and also the Soviet 'chess' novelty in the person of Zukhar had been prepared earlier for the match with Fischer. And he demanded that a glass screen should be installed between the players and the spectators, stating: 'The centaur with the head of Zukhar and the body of Karpov must be split in two, otherwise the match is impossible!'

But Stean and Murey persuaded him to continue the match. Keene and Baturinsky signed a written 'gentlemen's' agreement, according to which Korchnoi gave up his demand for the installation of a glass screen and his use of mirrored glasses (apparently they 'impeded Karpov's vision'), and Karpov agreed that 'starting from the 18th game and to the end of the match, professor Zukhar would sit in the sector allotted for the official members of the Soviet chess delegation'.

The next three fighting games ended in draws, though in the 20th (where Korchnoi first tried the Caro-Kann) a miracle occurred: Karpov achieved an absolutely won position, but he sealed a second-rate move (after half an hour's thought!) and missed a seemingly certain win on the resumption.

A new twist in the confrontation began from the 19th game. Korchnoi: 'I acquired some voluntary, unpaid assistants – two yogis, the Americans Stephen Dwyer and Victoria Shepperd. They only had to enter the hall and seat themselves in the lotus posture, for something to happen with Zukhar. He covered his face with a handkerchief, and within a short time he left the hall – for good, until the end of the game.' Before the 21st game the jury again assembled. 'Campomanes announced that my yogis, members of the Ananda Marga organisation, had been accused of murdering an Indian diplomat, but released on bail for lack of evidence, and as potential criminals they should not be in the hall. Such was the Soviet viewpoint! Throughout the world the "presumption of innocence" is adopted: until evidence has been gathered to show that a person has committed a crime, he cannot be treated as a criminal. Here it was just the opposite! But it was clear that dangerous criminals, real terrorists, would not have been released for any money.'

Nevertheless, the jury removed the yogis from the hall, and then from the hotel where Korchnoi was living. He was very angered when he learned that his new helpers, graduates from Harvard University – Dada and Didi to give them their Eastern names – had been forced to give a written undertaking not to leave his out of town villa, where they were living. And of course he submitted another protest...

In the 21st game there again, as in the 9th, occurred the variation of the Queen's Gambit with 5 ♗f4, which owes its subsequent popularity to Korchnoi. In all three games of the match in Baguio, played with this variation,

Karpov had to conduct a difficult defence. In the 21st game he tried to solve his problems with the help of an extremely risky, but unexpected counterattack in the opening, involving a sacrifice of material. Such a bluff could well have worked in the pre-computer era, and besides, Karpov firmly held the initiative in the match – his opponent, by his own admission, was exhausted.

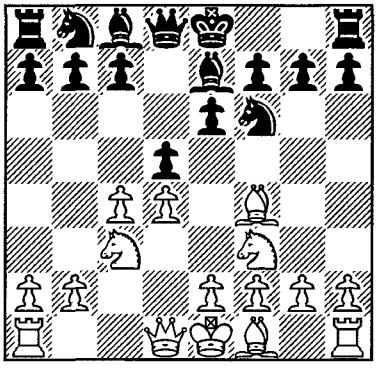
But the challenger conducted the game with staggering composure and later called it his best achievement in the match. It should be said that, apart from Korchnoi himself, this uncommonly complicated and fascinating encounter has been annotated at various times by many well-known writers: Tal, Larsen, Kholmov, Filip, Panno, Pachman, Keene, Timman, Dvoretsky...

Game 30

V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov

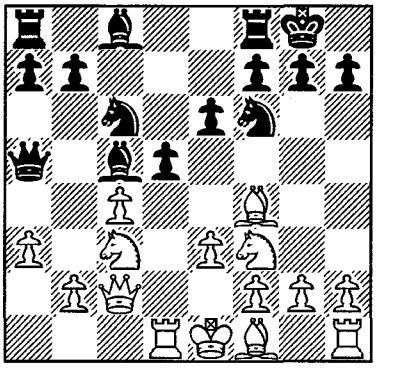
World Championship Match,
Baguio 1978, 21st game
Queen's Gambit D37

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 d4 ♗e7 5 ♗f4



In contrast to 5 ♗g5, this move, in the words of Korchnoi, 'is less well studied, and gives scope for the creative imagination of players and (especially!) their trainers.' In the 1960s-1970s 5 ♗f4 was occasionally played by Petrosian, and also the Hungarian players Portisch, Forintos and Farago.

5...0-0 6 e3 c5 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 ♕c2 ♘c6 9 ♖d1 (after 9 a3 ♕a5 White retains a choice between 10 ♖d1, the modest 10 ♖c1, and the more ambitious continuations 10 ♘d2!? or 10 0-0-0!? – cf. *Volume 4, Game No.41*) **9...♕a5 10 a3**



10...♖e8?!

'Another innovation by the formidable Soviet team. Exploiting his slight lead in development, Black tries to build up an attack on the white king caught in the centre. One has to give Karpov his due. It extremely rarely occurs to him to create something new on the chessboard. According to rumours, the rook move to e8 was the brainchild of one of the people from his headquarters – grandmaster Igor Zaitsev,' Korchnoi comments, not without venom.

The main line is still 10...♗e7 11 ♘d2 e5 (when in 1979, inspired by his opponent's opening ideas, Karpov employed this variation with White against Spassky, the latter replied 11...♗d7?! and failed to equalise) 12 ♗g5 d4 13 ♘b3, and here there is a great amount of theory, the basis of which was laid in Baguio:

1) 13...♕d8 14 ♗e2 h6 (14...♘g4!? Petrosian-Filip, Curaçao Candidates 1962; Portisch-Spassky, Havana Olympiad 1966) 15 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 16 0-0 ♗e6 (16...g6!?) 17 ♘c5 ♕e7 18 ♘xe6 ♕xe6 19 ♘d5 with a slight advantage for White (9th game);

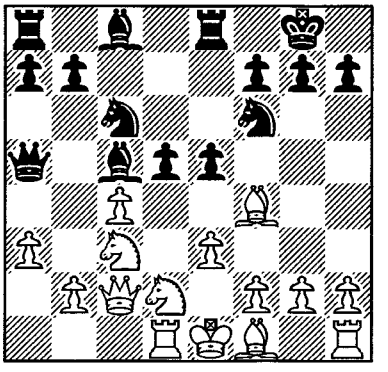
Later it transpired that 14...a5! is stronger –

the history of this variation includes the games Farago-Geller (Novi Sad 1979), Korchnoi-Hübner (6th matchgame, Merano 1980/81), Portisch-Beliavsky (Moscow 1981), Korchnoi-Karpov (11th matchgame, Merano 1981) etc., right up to the simultaneous game Alterman-Kasparov (Tel Aviv 1998);

2) 13...♕b6 (a more tedious continuation, after which Black experiences certain technical difficulties) 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘d5 ♕d8 16 ♗d3 g6 17 exd4 ♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 exd4 19 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 20 0-0 ♗e6 21 ♖fe1 (21 f4!? Forintos) 21...♖ac8 22 b3 ♖fd8, and in the end Karpov gained a draw (23rd game).

11 ♘d2! (with the threat of b2-b4; 11 b4 ♘xb4 or 11 ♘e5 d4! is bad for White)

11...e5



12 ♗g5 ♘d4

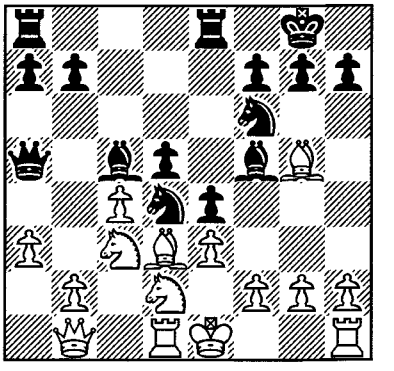
It is this that comprises Black's main idea. 'Having destroyed his base in the centre, he is obliged to continue in sacrificial style. After 12...d4 13 ♘b3 ♕b6 14 ♘a4 ♗b4+ 15 axb4 ♕xb4+ 16 ♘d2 White repulses the attack.' (Korchnoi). Thus 16...dxe3 17 fxe3 ♘d4 does not work in view of 18 exd4 exd4+ 19 ♔f2 and wins (Dvoretsky).

13 ♕b1!

The only correct decision! The cowardly 13 ♕a4 ♕xa4 14 ♘xa4 ♘c2+ 15 ♔e2 ♘d4+! 16 ♔e1 would have led only to a draw. 'Since Karpov had played the first 12 moves in half a minute, I had no desire to check the correctness of the sacrifice, especially since a grandmaster of my age and with my experience can often determine the suitability of a sacrifice at a glance. The position after 13 exd4 exd4+ 14 ♘e2 ♘e4 15 ♗h4 ♗f5 did not appeal to me, so I did not bother looking any further.' (Korchnoi) In fact, 14...♘g4! (with the same threat of ...d4-d3 and ...♗xf2 mate) is even better: 15 ♗h4 d3! 16 ♕xd3 ♘e5 17 ♕xd5 ♗f5, and the stalemated white pieces are unable to help their king (18 b4 ♗xb4 etc.).

13...♗f5 (13...♗g4? 14 ♗xf6 gxf6 15 ♘xd5 and wins) **14 ♗d3 e4?!**

In order to exploit the energy of the rook at e8, Black would like to open the e-file. However, he had a more tenacious alternative: 14...♗xd3 15 ♕xd3 ♘e4 16 ♘cxe4 dxe4 17 ♕xe4 ♘b3 18 ♕c2 ♘xd2 19 ♖xd2 (19 ♕xd2 ♕a4! with counterplay for the pawn, but not Tal's variation 19...♕xd2+?! 20 ♖xd2 h6 21 ♗h4 g5 22 ♗g3 f5 on account of 23 ♖d5!) 19...f6 20 ♗xf6! (if 20 ♗h4, then 20...♗f8(e7) is acceptable – Marin) 20...gxf6 21 b4 ♕xa3 22 bxc5 ♕a1+ 23 ♖d1 ♕a5+ 24 ♔e2 or 22...♕xc5 23 0-0 ♖ad8 24 ♖fd1, and in view of the weakened position of his king, Black stands somewhat worse.



White faces a difficult problem. One thing is clear: after the immediate 15 ♗xf6? exd3 the rook at e8 begins to operate and Black gains excellent counterplay: 16 ♗xd4 ♗xd4 17 ♘xd5 b5 etc. This means that the bishop must be moved from d3. But where to?

15 ♗c2!?

Again Korchnoi gives a remarkable comment: 'How many times have I been reproached for "pawn-grabbing", for aiming to capture material at any cost, however terrible the attack that I had to withstand for this material! But here I refrained from 15 ♗f1, which would have given White a material advantage, although I did not see a direct refutation of it. And home analysis after the game showed that White can repulse the attack. But what complicated variations!... But it was not in vain that I played for three months with the most practical champion in the history of chess! Even I was able to learn a little about how to economise on time and energy. And I had learned! And in a couple of minutes, without delving into details, on general grounds I made a practical, *Karpovian* move.'

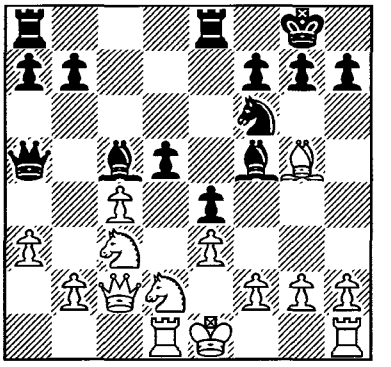
An important psychological nuance: after the paradoxical 'Steinitzian' 15 ♗f1! White would have come under an attack, without knowing how deeply all its variations had been analysed at home by his opponent. We will consider two directions:

1) 15...♗xa3?! 16 ♗xf6 gxf6 17 ♕c1 ♗b4 18 exd4 e3 (Korchnoi) 19 ♘f3!, or 17 cxd5 ♗b4 18 exd4, and Black has no real compensation for the sacrificed piece: if 18...e3 19 ♕xf5 ♗xc3 20 bxc3 ♕xc3, then 21 ♕g4+! ♔h8 22 fxe3 (Timman) 22...♖xe3+ 23 ♔f2! or 22...♕xe3+ 23 ♗e2 with a decisive advantage;

2) 15....♘g4 16 cxd5 ♘e5 17 exd4! (in Korchnoi's variation 17 ♕c1 ♘d3+ 18 ♗xd3 exd3 19 b4 ♕a6 20 bxc5 ♕g6, in my opinion, 21 h4! h6 22 ♔f1 is strong, while Black has 19...♗xb4!? 20 axb4 ♕xb4 with sharp play), and White retains the advantage both after 17...♗xd4 18 ♗e3 ♗xe3 19 fxe3 ♕c5 20 ♘dxe4 ♕xe3+ 21 ♗e2 (Timman) or 18 ♗e2 ♘d3+ (18...♗xf2+?! 19 ♔f1!) 19 ♔f1, and after 17...♘f3+ 18 gxf3 exf3+ 19 ♘de4 ♖xe4+ 20 ♕xe4! or 19...♗xe4 20 ♕c1 and ♗e3, when he begins the conversion of his extra material.

Nevertheless, Korchnoi quickly played 15 ♗c2, having soberly judged that after this move (in contrast to the objectively stronger 15 ♗f1) White faced no particular threats, and even if he did not gain a big advantage, the opponent would have to switch from his attack to the study of inferior positions, where the limit of Black's dreams would be a draw.

15...♘xc2+ 16 ♕xc2



16...♕a6

A difficult choice. Larsen suggested 16...d4, but this is weak on account of 17 ♗xf6 dxc3 (17...gxf6 18 ♘b3 d3 19 ♕xd3!, while Tal's idea 17...dxe3 18 fxe3 ♗xe3 is incorrect in view of 19 ♘f1!) 18 ♕xc3 ♕b6 (exchange queens?!) 19 g4! ♗xg4 (otherwise 20 ♗xg7) 20 ♖g1, and it is now White who is on the attack.

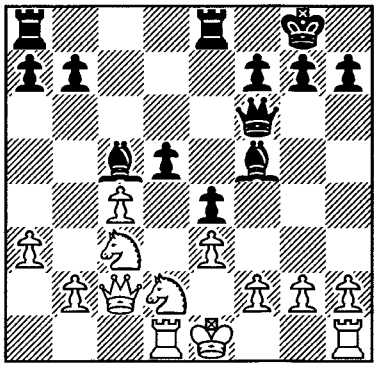
But 16...dxc4 17 ♗xf6 gxf6 (Kholmov) came into consideration, not fearing 18 ♘xc4 in view of 18...♕a6 19 ♕a4 (weaker is 19 ♘d5?! ♖ac8 20 ♕c3 ♗e7 or 19 ♖d5 ♕xc4 20 ♖xf5 ♖ac8 with the threat of ...♗xa3) 19...♕e6! 20 0-0 (20 ♘a5 ♗f8!?) 20...a6 with a good game for Black: the two bishops and various tactical resources compensate for the weakening of his kingside.

However, Korchnoi was planning 18 0-0! with the threats of b2-b4 and ♘dxe4. Indeed, after 18...♗f8 (18...♔g7? 19 b4!) 19 ♘dxe4 ♕e5 20 ♖d4 ♖ac8 21 ♕d2 White has a clear advantage. In the event of 18...♕a6 19 ♘d5 ♖ac8 20 ♕xc4 ♕e6 21 ♘f4 (Korchnoi) 21...♕xc4 22 ♘xc4 ♖ed8! (Dvoretsky) it is not so great, but 20 f3! is better, beginning to

play for an attack.

'With the move in the game Karpov sacrifices a pawn, but prevents the break-up of his kingside pawns. It is possible that the continuation chose by him is objectively weaker than 16...dxc4 17 ♗xf6 gxf6, but it should not be forgotten that over the three months I also taught the champion something – to avoid irreparable pawn weaknesses!' (Korchnoi). With this idea 16...♗e7 17 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 18 ♘xd5 ♗e5 (Tal) 19 0-0 ♖ac8 is also interesting, although after 20 ♕b3 ♕a6 21 f3 exf3 22 ♘xf3 or 21...♗d7 22 ♖c1 the powerful knight at d5 prevents Black from achieving equality.

17 ♗xf6 ♕xf6



18 ♘b3!

Perhaps Karpov was expecting 18 ♘xd5 ♕g5 (Tal) 19 0-0 ♗d6! (Dvoretsky), provoking g2-g3 and obtaining good play for the sacrificed pawn. But White plays more strongly, gaining a tempo by the attack on the bishop at c5.

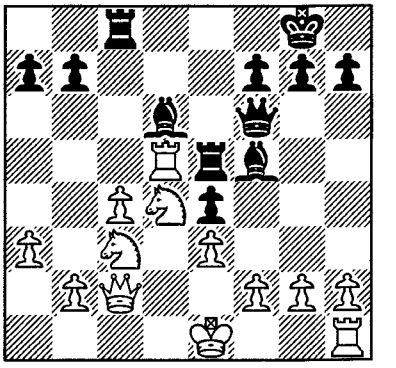
18...♗d6 19 ♖xd5 ♖e5

Forced. 19...♗e5 20 ♘d4 ♗xd4 21 ♖xd4 ♕g5 is pointless in view of 22 0-0! ♗h3 23 f4 exf3 24 ♖xf3, and after 24...♖xe3 25 ♕d2! ♖e1+ 26 ♔f2 ♕xg2+ 27 ♔xe1 ♖e8+ 28 ♖e4 White wins (Dvoretsky).

Korchnoi gives 19...♕g6 20 0-0 ♕h6 (20...♗h3? 21 f4) 21 g3, with the summary: 'Karpov apparently decided that all the same he would be unable to exploit this weakening, and he preferred to exchange the centralised white pieces.' And indeed, 21...♗g4? is bad – 22 ♘xe4 ♗f3 23 ♘bd2 ♖xe4 24 ♘xf3 and wins (Kholmov), while after 21...♕g6 (21...♗e5 22 f4!) 22 ♘d4 ♗h3 23 ♖d1 ♗f8 24 ♘de2 ♗g4 25 ♖1d4 and ♘f4 White is a pawn up and he dominates the centre – Black's e4-pawn is weak and his bishops cannot find employment.

20 ♘d4 ♖c8

Another very important moment.



21 ♖xe5!

'Faithful to his tactics, Korchnoi avoids a "close-range fight". Meanwhile, by 21 f4 he could have placed his opponent in a difficult position, since the piece sacrifice 21...exf3? 22 ♘xf5 fxg2 23 ♖g1 is insufficient.' (Tal). But in fact after 21...♖xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♕h4+ 23 ♕f2 ♕h5 or 23 g3 ♕h3 things are better for Black than in the game.

In the words of Korchnoi, 'White must be careful – after 21 ♘xf5 ♖xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♕xf5 23 ♕b3 ♕e5 24 g3 (24 a4!?) 24...b5! 25 ♕xb5 ♖b8 26 ♕d7 ♕xb2 27 0-0 ♕xa3 he would have lost nearly all his advantage.' But 28 ♕g4! would have won the e4-pawn. In addition, 22 cxd5! ♕xf5 23 0-0 is possible, forcing Black to suffer a pawn down either with the queens on – 23...♕e5 24 g3 (in the event of 24...♗xa3 25 ♕b3! ♗xb2? 26 ♘a4! ♗c1(a1) 27 ♕xb7 the outcome is again decided by the passed d-pawn), or without the queens – 23...♕xd5 24 ♖d1 ♕e5 25 g3 ♗f8 26 ♕xe4 ♕xe4 27 ♘xe4 f5 (27...♖c2 28 ♖d8) 28 ♘g5

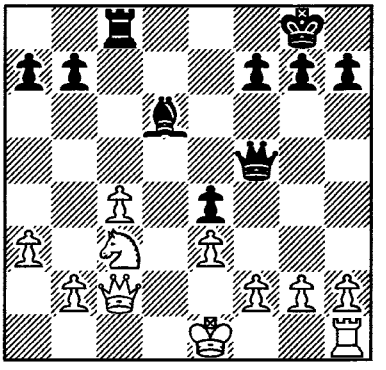
♗e7 29 ♘f3 ♗f6 30 b4 etc.

Even so, in connection with the note to the next move, 21 ♖xe5! gives White good winning chances.

21...♕xe5 22 ♘xf5?!

Dvoretsky's suggestion was stronger: 22 f4! ♕f6 (22...♕c5 23 ♘a4 is no better, while 22...exf3? 23 ♘xf5 is simply incorrect) 23 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 (23...♕g6 24 ♘f6+ ♕xf6 25 ♕xf5) 24 ♕xe4 ♖xc4 25 0-0 with a great advantage to White.

22...♕xf5



23 0-0

'Psychologically understandable: I was tired of playing with my king in the centre, and I decided to return the pawn, but to complete my development, hoping subsequently to exploit the tactical weaknesses in Black's position – e4, b7, d6 and the 8th rank,' writes Korchnoi, mentioning 23 ♕xe4? ♕xe4 24 ♘xe4 ♖xc4 25 ♘c3 ♗xa3 and offering a choice between:

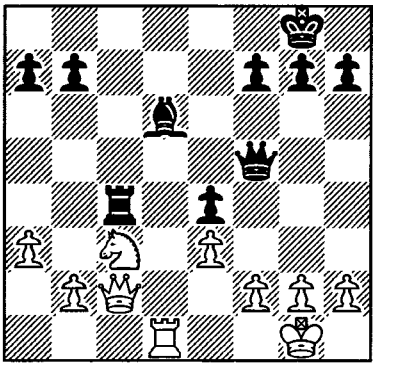
1) the 'technical' 23 ♕b3 – but here, in my view, after 23...♕c5! 24 0-0 ♕xc4 25 ♕xb7 ♖b8 26 ♕xa7 ♖xb2 27 ♕d7 ♗f8! (27...♗xa3 28 ♕e8+ ♗f8 29 ♘xe4 is not so clear) 28 ♘d5 ♖a2 Black has good chances of saving the game;

2) the 'strong' 23 ♘xe4, and if 23...b5, then 24 0-0 ♖xc4 (I think that 24...♗f8 25 b3! ♗xa3 26 ♖a1 is bad for Black) 25 ♕d2, 'retaining a healthy extra pawn'. But, according to Dvoretsky, after 25...♗c7 26 ♘g3 ♕e6 27 ♖d1 g6! 'the activity of Black's pieces largely compensates for his slight material deficit'. 25 ♕d1!? is more cunning, with the idea of 25...♗c7 26 ♘g3 ♕e6(e5) 27 ♕f3.

Korchnoi chose perhaps the best and definitely the most venomous continuation: the opponent is able to regain his pawn and it appears that a draw is now inevitable, but...

23...♖xc4 24 ♖d1

Not 24 ♕b3?! ♕c8.



24...♕e5?!

Up till now, and then up to the 38th move, Karpov resourcefully sought counter-chances after his risky opening novelty. But this move was generally condemned.

Tal recommended 24...♗e7. Indeed, after 25 ♖d4 ♖xd4 26 exd4 ♕g5! (26...♗f6 27 ♘xe4, and 27...♗xd4? is not possible on account of 28 ♘f6+! Kholmov) 27 ♘xe4 ♕d5 it is not easy for White to convert his pawn advantage: 28 ♕d3 ♕a2 or 28 ♕a4 ♗xa3!, while if 28 ♘g3 (Korchnoi), then 28...g6 (Dvoretsky) 29 ♕e4?! (29 ♘e2 is better) 29...♕xe4 30 ♘xe4 f5 and ...♔f7-e6-d5 with a draw. But a move earlier 27 g3! is more methodical, with the idea of 27...e3 (27...f5? 28 ♕b3+ and ♕xb7) 28 f4! ♕g4 29 ♕e4 and wins (Kholmov), or 27...♗f8 28 ♔g2! b6 (28...e3 29 ♕c1) 29 h4, winning the e-pawn in comfort.

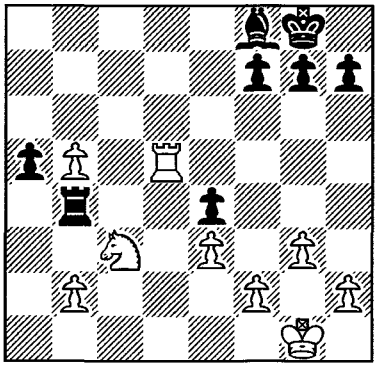
Korchnoi considered the best defence to be 24...♗f8 25 ♖d8 (25 ♖d4?! is unfavourable: 25...♖xd4 26 exd4 ♕g5 27 ♘xe4 ♕d5 28 ♕d3 ♕a2 etc.) 25...g6 26 ♕d1 ♔g7 27 h3

'with some advantage to White'. Alas, 27 ♖d4 ♕c8 28 ♖xe4 does not work on account of 28...♗xa3! Therefore, in my view, 26 ♕d2! is more accurate, and if 26...♔g7, then 27 ♖d4!, winning the e4-pawn, while after 26...♕e5 27 ♖a8 ♔g7 (27...a6? 28 ♕d8) 28 ♖xa7 White is again a pawn up, although after 28...♕d6 29 ♕xd6 ♗xd6 it is still possible to fight for a draw.

25 g3 (now ♕b3 is threatened) **25...a6 26 ♕b3 b5** (26...♖c7 27 ♘xe4 or, according to taste, 27 ♕d5) **27 a4!**

It unexpectedly transpires that, because of the weakness of his back rank and the vulnerability of his rook and bishop, Black loses a pawn. He has to chose the lesser evil.

27...♖b4! (if 27...♖c5, then 28 axb5 axb5 29 ♕a2! ♗f8 30 ♖d8 ♕e7 31 ♕a8 f5 32 ♖b8 ♕d6 33 ♔g2 and wins) **28 ♕d5 ♕xd5 29 ♖xd5 ♗f8 30 axb5 a5!** (avoiding 30...axb5 31 ♖xb5)



31 ♖d8

'In this position Bent Larsen suggested 31 b6 ♖xb6 32 ♖xa5 ♖xb2 33 ♘xe4, when he reckons (*and justifiably – G.K.*) that White has good winning chances. As for myself, I believe in the strength of a passed pawn!' (Korchnoi)

31...♖xb2 32 ♖a8 f5

After 32...♖b3 White wins by 33 ♘d5 f5 (33...g6 34 ♖xa5 ♗c5 35 b6! ♗xb6 36 ♖a8+ and ♖b8) 34 ♖xa5 ♔f7 35 b6 ♗d6 (35...♔e6 36 ♘c7+!) 36 ♖a7+ ♔e6 37 ♘c7+ ♗xc7 38 ♖xc7! (Korchnoi) 38...♖xb6 39 ♖xg7. 32...a4 33 ♖xa4 ♖b3 34 ♖c4 g6 35 ♖c6 ♗g7 36 ♖c8+ ♗f8 37 g4! is also hopeless (Dvoretsky).

33 ♖xa5 ♗b4 34 ♖a8+ ♔f7

The rook at b2 is ideally placed: it hinders the advance of the passed b-pawn and attacks the f2-point. At first sight it would appear that in this endgame Black has more chance of drawing than White of winning. But the challenger shows that this is not so.

35 ♘a4

Driving the rook off the 2nd rank and ensuring the advance of the b-pawn. In Korchnoi's words, 'A knight on the edge of the board stands badly – all players, including grandmasters, know this. But White's primary objective is to prevent an attack on his f2-pawn by the rook from b2 and bishop from e1!'

After 35 ♘d5?! White would have had to reckon with both 35...♗e1 36 ♔f1 ♖b1! (Dvoretsky), and 35...♗c5 36 ♖b8 g5. However, in Dvoretsky's opinion, it would have been very strong to interpose the check 35 ♖a7+!, since if 35...♔f6, then 36 ♘d5+ ♔g6 37 b6 ♗e1 38 b7 is now decisive, while after 35...♔e6(g6) the move 36 ♘a4! achieves far greater effect.

35...♖b1+ 36 ♔g2 ♗d6 37 ♖a7+ ♔f6 38 b6 ♗b8?!

After 38...h5 (Kholmov) White would have won by 39 ♘c3 ♖b3 40 ♘d5+ ♔e6 41 ♘f4+! ♗xf4 42 gxf4 g6 43 b7 and ♔g3-h4-g5 (Timman).

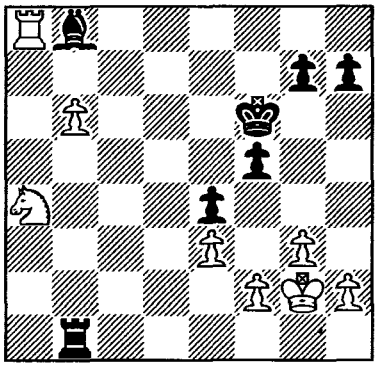
'38...♖b4 was better,' comments Korchnoi. 'In this case White could have moved his king across to the queenside – 39 ♔f1, or resorted to tactics, beginning with 39 ♘c3.' And concluding with the variation 39...♖b3 40 ♘d5+ ♔e5 41 ♘c7 ♗xc7 42 bxc7 (here 42 ♖xc7 ♖xb6 43 ♖xg7 is insufficient on account of 43...h6) 42...♖c3 43 c8♕ ♖xc8 44 ♖xg7 ♖h8 with drawing chances (for example, 45 f4+ exf3+ 46 ♔xf3 ♔f6 47 ♖a7 h6 48 ♖a6+ ♔g7 etc.).

Possibly, Karpov rejected 38...♖b4 because of 39 ♔f1 – he did not want to allow the white king to escape. However, the path to the

queenside was a lengthy one, and during this time Black could also have brought up his king and tried to exploit the unfortunate position of the knight at a4. Whereas most probably after 38...♗b8 his position is objectively lost.

39 ♖a8!

After Panno's move 39 ♖c7!? Dvoretsky advises 39...h5!?



39...♗e5?!

Defending against ♘c3-d5, but allowing ♘c5. Many recommended the more tenacious 39...♗d6, for example:

1) 40 ♖a6 ♔e5! (but not 40...♔e6 41 b7 ♔d7 42 ♘b6+ ♔c7 43 ♘c4 ♗e7 44 ♘a5 ♗d6 45 ♖a8 ♔d7 46 ♖g8 and wins – Korchnoi), and now not 41 ♖a7 ♖b4 42 ♘c3 on account of 42...♖xb6! (after 42...♖b3, Korchnoi's move, 43 ♖a5+ ♔e6 44 ♘b5 is strong) 43 ♖xg7 ♖b3 44 ♘e2 ♖b2 45 ♘d4 ♗c5 46 ♖xh7 ♗xd4 47 exd4+ ♔xd4 with a probable draw, but immediately 41 ♘c3! ♖b3 (if 41...♖b4(2) 42 ♖a5+ ♔e6, then 43 ♖b5!) 42 ♖a5+ ♔e6 43 ♘b5 ♗e5 44 b7, planning, by giving up the b-pawn, to gather a pawn harvest on the kingside: 44...♔d7 45 b8♕ ♗xb8 46 ♘d4 ♖b7 47 ♖xf5, or 44...♖b2 45 b8♕ ♗xb8 46 ♘d4+ ♔e7 47 ♘xf5+, and the weakness of the e4-pawn causes Black's downfall;

2) 40 ♘c3 ♖b3 41 ♘d5+ ♔e6 (41...♔e5?! 42 ♘c7!) 42 ♘c7+ ♔d7 43 ♘e8 g6 44 ♘xd6 ♔xd6 45 ♖b8 ♔c6, and here Timman gave 46 h4, but Dvoretsky refuted it by 46...♖xb6 47 ♖xb6+ ♔xb6 48 g4 fxg4 49 ♔g3 ♔c5 50 ♔f4 ♔d5 51 ♔xg4 ♔c4! with a draw, and suggested 46 g4! fxg4 47 ♔g3 ♖b5 (47...♖b2 48 b7! h5 49 ♖g8 ♔xb7 50 ♖xg6 etc.) 48 ♔xg4 ♖f5 49 ♔g3 ♖f3+ 50 ♔g2 ♖f7 51 ♖c8+ ♔xb6 52 ♖e8 with good winning chances.

In the game it all proved simpler: the white pawn quickly reached b7, where it was defended by the knight from c5, and the rook gained the opportunity to launch a raid into the opponent's rear.

40 ♘c5! ♗d6 41 b7 ♔e7 42 ♖g8 ♗e5 (42...♔f7 43 ♖d8 or 42...g6 43 ♘a6! was worse) **43 f4!**

The sealed move, which includes the king in the game. The adjourned position is already, of course, technically won for White, although he still has to avoid a number of pitfalls, involving threats to his b7-pawn (i.e. an attack on the knight at c5 by the bishop and the rook from b5). On the resumption, which took place the following day, Karpov put up a desperate resistance.

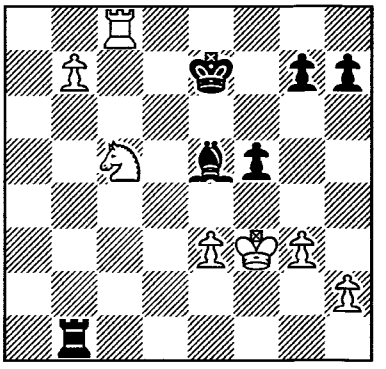
43...exf3+ 44 ♔xf3 ♔f7 45 ♖c8

'According to my adjournment analysis, the manoeuvre 45 ♖d8 ♔e7 46 ♖d7+ ♔e8 (46...♔f6? 47 ♖d5! ♗c7 48 ♘a6 ♖xb7 49 ♖d7) 47 ♖d5 ♗b8 48 ♖xf5 would have won a second pawn, but only temporarily. After 48...♗a7! the b-pawn is lost. I wanted more!' (Korchnoi). However, after 49 ♖e5+! ♔f7 50 ♘e6! ♔f6 51 ♖a5 ♖xb7 52 ♘d8 and ♖a6+ (Dvoretsky) Black is in trouble, and therefore 48...♗d6! 49 ♘e4 ♗e7 (Tal) is correct, with drawing chances.

On the other hand, 47 e4! (instead of 47 ♖d5) is stronger, when after 47...♖b5 White wins by both 48 exf5 ♖xc5 49 ♖xg7 h6 (Keene admitted that this position bothered their team during analysis) 50 f6! ♔f8 (50...♗d6 51 f7+ ♔f8 52 ♖g6 etc.) 51 ♖e7 ♗d6 52 ♖d7 ♗e5 53 ♔e4 ♖b5 54 ♔f5 ♗c7+ 55 ♔g6 ♖xb7 56 ♖h7 ♔e8 57 ♔xh6 (Dvoretsky), as well as Timman's 48 ♖d5! fxe4+ (48...♗b8 49 exf5 ♗a7 50 f6! gxf6 51 ♘e4 ♖b3+ 52 ♔g2! ♔e7 53 ♖h5 or 52...♖b2+ 53 ♔h3 ♗b8 54 ♘xf6+) 49 ♔xe4 ♗b8 50 ♔d3

♗a7 51 ♔c4 ♖b6 (51...♖b2 52 ♘b3) 52 ♘e4! ♗b8 53 ♖b5 etc.

45...♔e7



46 h3!

'This cunning move escaped the attention of the Soviet experts.' (Korchnoi). The frontal 46 e4, suggested by Tal, was also possible, for example:

1) 46...g6?! 47 ♘d3 fxe4+ 48 ♔xe4 ♗xg3 (after 48...♗d6 49 ♖h8 ♔d7 50 ♖xh7+ ♔c6 51 ♖g7 White is simply two pawns up) 49 hxg3 ♖xb7 50 ♘c5 (creating domination with a small army) 50...♖b1 51 ♔e5 ♖e1+ 52 ♘e4 and the rest is a matter of technique.

2) 46...fxe4+ 47 ♔xe4 ♗d6 48 ♔d5 (forcibly transposing into a theoretical endgame with rook and two pawns against bishop and two pawns) 48...♗xc5 (48...♖b5? 49 ♖e8+!) 49 b8♕ ♖xb8 50 ♖xb8 ♗g1 51 h3 ♔f7 (Timman), and a lengthy conversion process still lies ahead.

But after home analysis Korchnoi came to the conclusion that he could manage without having to demonstrate his knowledge of a technical ending (where the win for White is by no means simple and will slip away after the slightest error), and he made a move which does not spoil anything, prepares g3-g4 and gives the opponent an opportunity to declare his intentions.

46...h5?!

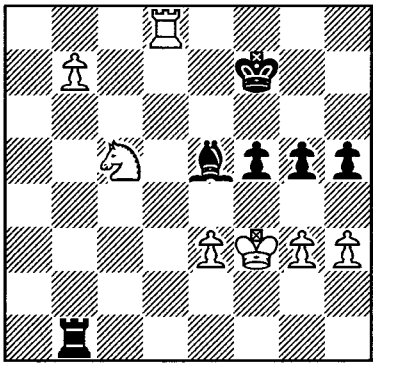
A weakening. However, even a more tenacious defence would not have helped, for example:

1) 46...g6 47 g4 ♖b5 48 gxf5 gxf5 49 ♘d3 ♗d6 50 ♖h8 (Dvoretsky), or 47...fxg4+ 48 ♔xg4! followed by ♔f3 and wins (Larsen);

2) 46...♖b5 47 g4 fxg4+ 48 hxg4 ♗d6 49 ♔e4 h6 (49...g6? 50 g5!) 50 ♔d3 ♖b4! 51 e4 ♗e5! (Andersson) 52 ♖g8! and Black is in zugzwang: 52...♖d4+ 53 ♔e2! ♖b4 54 ♘d3, or 52...♔f7 53 ♖d8 ♔e7 54 ♖d7+ ♔e8 55 ♖d5 ♗f6 56 e5 ♗e7 57 ♖d4! ♖b5 58 ♖a4! ♗xc5 59 ♖a8+ ♔f7 60 b8♕ and wins (analysis by Dvoretsky).

47 ♖g8! (a subtle manoeuvre, forcing Black to allow the rook to go to d8) **47...♔f7 48 ♖d8 g5**

The last practical chance. 48...♔e7 49 ♖d7+ ♔e8 50 ♖d5 is bad, since the h5-pawn will come under fire.



49 g4!

An accurate way of converting the advantage. 49 ♘d3?! g4+! 50 hxg4? (50 ♔g2! ♔e7 51 ♖d5 is correct – Dvoretsky) 50...hxg4+ 51 ♔f2 ♔e7! 52 ♘xe5 ♔xd8 53 b8♕+ ♖xb8 54 ♘c6+ ♔c7 55 ♘xb8 ♔xb8 56 e4 ♔c7! (Tal) or 52 ♖d5 ♗b8! 53 ♖xf5 ♖xb7 54 ♖g5 ♖b3! 55 ♘f4 ♖b2+ 56 ♔e1 ♔f6 57 ♖xg4 ♔f5 58 ♖g8 ♔e4 would have led to a draw.

49...hxg4+ (49...fxg4+ 50 hxg4 h4 51 ♘d7 and b8♕ was clearly bad) **50 hxg4 ♔e7** (50...♔f7 51 ♖c8! fxg4+ 52 ♔xg4 ♗d6 53 e4 ♗f4 54 ♔f5 ♖f1 55 ♘d7 ♔e7 56 e5 and wins – Kholmov) **51 ♖g8 fxg4+ 52 ♔xg4 ♔f7** (52...♗d6 53 ♘a6) **53 ♖c8 ♗d6 54 e4**

Another passed pawn has begun advancing (the consequence of the undermining move g3-g4!) and the fate of the game is decided.
54...♖g1+ (or 54...♔f6 55 b8♕ ♗xb8 56 ♖xb8 ♖xb8 57 ♘d7+ ♔e6 58 ♘xb8 ♔e5 59 ♔f3 g4+ 60 ♔e3 g3 61 ♘c6+ ♔d6 62 ♘d4 and wins) **55 ♔f5 g4 56 e5!**

'Since Karpov did not resign, apparently hoping to prolong the game, I decided to conclude matters as quickly and as prettily as possible.' (Korchnoi)
56...♖f1+ 57 ♔e4 ♖e1+ 58 ♔d5 ♖d1+ (58...♗xe5 59 ♘d3) **59 ♘d3! ♖xd3+ 60 ♔c4 1-0**

Black resigned, and the score became 4-2.

In the 22nd game (again a French Defence) things were heading for a draw, but the challenger made a serious mistake in time-trouble and lost a pawn. When the time control was reached, his position was completely hopeless. 'But, evidently, the "yoghurt" was too nutritious that day. Karpov continued playing like a wound-up machine (although he could have adjourned the game), made four weak moves in a row, and in the adjourned position the draw was not far off,' writes Korchnoi. In the 23rd game the advantage was on his side, but Karpov 'not without difficulty found a study-like defence' and gained a draw.

But in the 24th game Korchnoi successfully played the Open Variation of the Spanish (cf. *Game No.31*, note to Black's 9th move) and for the first time over a long period he gained an advantage with Black, but Karpov 'again managed to escape with a draw.' On the other hand, the champion could have won the 25th game, but he blundered in the opponent's traditional time-trouble and was forced to find a draw in the adjourned position. The draw in the 26th game was not so bloody.

Seeing how dispirited and disillusioned his opponent was, Korchnoi used his last strength to try and change the course of the match, but: 'Desperate play for a win can at any moment turn into failure, and in the 27th game (in my opinion, one of the weakest in the match) this finally happened.' I should mention Korchnoi's important novelty in what was considered a harmless variation of the English Opening – **1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 ♗b4 5 ♘d5 ♘xd5 6 cxd5 ♘d4 7 ♘xd4 exd4 8 ♕c2!** with the better position for White. But Karpov managed to equalise and then when, in pursuit of the mirage of an advantage, his opponent made a series of inaccuracies, he seized the initiative and won.

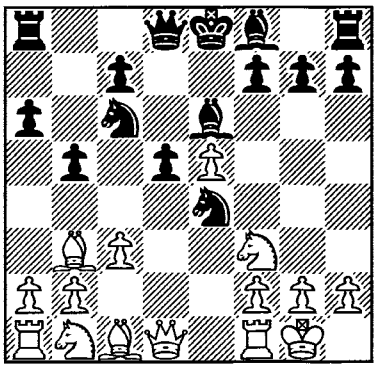
The score become 5-2, and Karpov only had to win one more game. But here the match entered its most intriguing phase. 'The Gods on Mount Olympus have abandoned their child and drawn attention to an outcast... Karpov's play wasn't working, something had broken down in his splendid chess motor. The almost classical style of the artist not only lost its usual brilliance – it simply became deformed under the weight of that pressure exerted on it by the "collective": the refined technique became blunt, and the computer-like forecasting was replaced by yawning gaps. The masses began to devour the creator.' (from an article by Emmanuel Sztein, Korchnoi's future press attaché).

In the 28th game the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez again passed its endurance test. The revival of this variation in the 1980s-1990s is largely associated with the name of Korchnoi, who upheld it both in Baguio, and three years later in Merano. And although in the 14th and 18th games of the match in Merano White was able to gain important wins (*Game Nos.85 and 86*), Korchnoi's ideas did not lose their topicality, and some of his suggestions are still the main lines today.

Game 31
A.Karpov-V.Korchnoi
World Championship Match,
Baguio 1978, 28th game
Ruy Lopez C82

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6

5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3



9...♘c5

At that time this was a comparatively little-studied line. After the 14th game Korchnoi temporarily avoided 9...♗c5 (*Game Nos.35 and 75*). And the 24th went 9...♗e7 10 ♗c2 ♘c5 11 h3 0-0 12 ♖e1 ♕d7 13 ♘d4 ♘xd4 14 cxd4 ♘b7 15 ♘d2 c5 16 dxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♘f3 with a slight advantage for White, which, however, was quickly neutralised.

10 ♗c2 ♗g4 11 ♖e1 ♗e7 12 ♘bd2 ♕d7 13 ♘b3

A natural plan, but not the most forceful, which can also be said about 13 h3 ♗h5 14 ♘f1 ♖d8 15 ♘g3 ♗g6 16 ♘d4 0-0!? 17 ♗f5 ♘e6 18 ♗g4 ♘cxd4 19 cxd4 c5 20 ♘f5 ♕a7! 21 ♘xe7+ ♕xe7 22 ♗e3 cxd4 23 ♗xd4 ♖c8... 0-1 (Hübner-Korchnoi, Tilburg 1986).

As it later transpired, 13 ♘f1! is more energetic: 13...♖d8 14 ♘e3 ♗h5 15 b4! (after 15 ♘f5 0-0 16 ♘xe7+ ♘xe7 in 1987 Korchnoi won with Black against Y.Gruenfeld, A.Sokolov and Marjanovic) 15...♘e6, and here White has played both 16 ♘f5 0-0 17 a4 (Balashov-Portisch, Moscow 1981) or 16...d4?! 17 ♗e4! (Hjartarson-Korchnoi, 1st match-game, Saint John 1988), and 16 g4 ♗g6 17 ♘f5 0-0 18 a4 ♖fe8 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♗d3 ♖b8 21 ♕e2 ♘cd8 22 ♖a5! with appreciable pressure (Khalifman-Marin, Istanbul Olympiad 2000).

13...♘e6

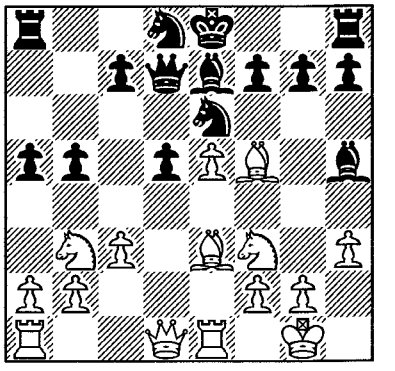
13...♘xb3?! 14 axb3 is weaker, as is 13...0-0 14 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 15 b4 ♗b6 16 ♕d3 g6 17 ♗h6 ♖fe8 18 a4. 'Black is deliberately refraining from castling; the rook on h8 will have its say.' (Tal)

14 h3 (14 ♕d3 ♗h5! 15 ♘fd4 ♗g6 with equality, Schmid-Korchnoi, London 1979) **14...♗h5 15 ♗f5** (fighting for the central squares) **15...♘cd8**

A novelty. Previously 15...♖d8?! 16 a4! had occurred, but later 15...♗g6!? was successfully employed (Nunn-Tal, Naestved 1985; Leko-Piket, Wijk aan Zee 2000).

16 ♗e3 a5

A typical advance: Black wants to seize space on the queenside with gain of tempo (...a5-a4). 16...♘b7 with the idea of ...c7-c5 is also interesting (Sigurjonsson-Stean, Munich 1979). 'Karpov was ready for this and was intending to reply 17 ♘bd2 c5 18 ♘f1.' (Tal)



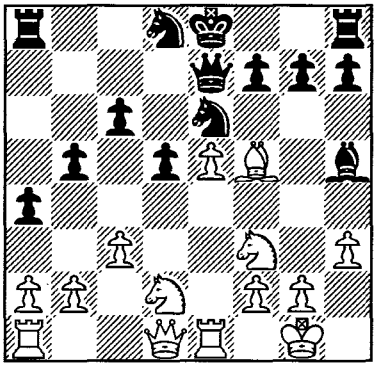
17 ♗c5

Tal explained this sensible move as being due to the champion relaxing after his fifth win in the preceding game and by a desire to avoid complications. But is there anything better? According to Flohr, '17 a4 could have greatly activated things', but after 17...bxa4 White has no advantage: 18 ♘bd2 ♗g6, 18 ♘bd4 c5, or 18 ♘c5 ♗xc5 19 ♗xc5 g6 20 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 21 ♗e3 ♗xf3 22 ♕xf3 0-0 with equality. Little is also promised by 17 ♘c5 ♗xc5 18 ♗xc5 ♗g6 19 ♗g4 h5 20 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 21 ♗e3 c5 (Zarnicki-Sorokin, Villa Gesell 1996).

17...a4 18 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 19 ♘bd2

But this is indeed the result of relaxation. 'White would like to play knight more actively with his knight, but in the event of 19 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 20 cxd4 ♘e6 Black quickly sets up counterplay against the central pawn.' (Tal). After 21 ♕c2 0-0! 22 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 23 g4 ♗g6! 24 ♗xg6 fxg6 this is so. But, as games from the end of the century showed, after 21 g4 ♗g6 22 ♖c1 White has somewhat the better chances. Therefore also after 19 ♘bd4! (the only way to fight for an advantage) they began playing 19...c6.

19...c6



Thus White has not succeeded in gaining firm control of the c5-square and Black has solved his opening problems. Moreover, he can now think about gradually seizing the strategic initiative. Korchnoi's plan has fully justified itself!

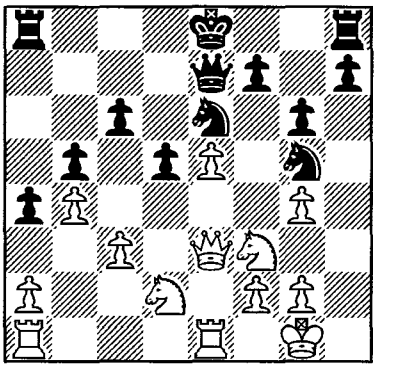
20 b4

A quite reasonable move, although, according to Flohr, it denies White the possibility of play on the queenside and weakens the c4-square, which will be important in the endgame (the threat of ...d5-d4). 'Karpov did not evaluate his position very optimistically,' explained Tal. 'Meanwhile, the simple 20 ♕c2 would have allowed him to play on without any risk.'

20...♘g5 (in order, after the exchange of a pair of minor pieces, to remain with a knight against a bishop) **21 ♕e2 g6 22 ♗g4?!**

One doesn't like to attach a question mark here, but objectively this is a mistake. 'The champion apparently "believed" his opponent. After the retreat of the bishop to d3 or c2 he would have retained an excellent position. Black's pawn majority on the queenside is static – the advance of any of the pawns automatically activates the bishop.' (Tal). And indeed, after 22 ♗d3! ♘de6 23 ♕e3 ♗xf3 24 ♘xf3 ♘xf3+ 25 ♕xf3 (Filip) White is alright.

22...♗xg4 23 hxg4 ♘de6 24 ♕e3



24...h5!

Exploiting the position of the rook at h8. In a good position, as Tal put it, 'Black can allow himself to play sharply, not only because his competitive situation argues against half-measures.'

25 ♘xg5

If 25 ♘h2 there can follow 25...hxg4 26 ♘xg4 0-0-0 (Tal), and Black's king hides on the queenside, whereas White's faces difficulties on the h-file, or 25...♕a7, 'aiming for a better endgame' (Flohr).

25...♕xg5 26 ♕xg5 ♘xg5 27 gxh5

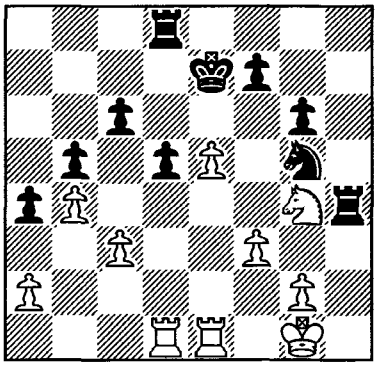
'Perhaps in his preliminary calculations White had been relying on the active 27 f4?! ♘e6 28 f5, but here he discovered that after 28...♘g7 he would be forced to make material or positional concessions.' (Tal). 28...♘f4 or 28...♘g5 also comes into consideration.

27...♖xh5 28 ♘f1 ♖h4 (a complicated ending has arisen with somewhat the better chances for Black, but, of course, with accu-

rate play White must be able to hold the game) **29 ♖ad1 ♔e7**

Bringing up the king. 29...♘e4 was pointless in view of 30 ♖d4! (Filip) 30...♖h6(7) 31 ♖e3 ♔e7 32 f3.

30 f3 ♘e6 31 ♘e3 ♖d8 (to support the ...d5-d4 breakthrough) **32 ♘g4 ♘g5** (32...♘g7!)



33 ♘e3?!

'The attempt 33 ♔f2?! would have been refuted by 33...♘e4+ 34 fxe4 ♖xg4, when the rook ending is advantageous to Black. Karpov does not object to a repetition of moves, but 33 ♖d4 was preferable, in order after 33...♘e6 to retreat 34 ♖d2.' (Tal)

33...♘e6 (33...d4!?) **34 ♘g4 ♘g7!**

'After repeating moves to gain time on the clock (as usual Korchnoi was in time-trouble), Black finds the best plan. Practically any rook ending is in his favour.' (Tal)

35 ♘e3?! (White wrongly retreats – as all the commentators pointed out, 35 ♔f2 was clearly better) **35...♘f5!**

An excellent move, which was apparently underestimated by Karpov.

36 ♘c2?!

'It is paradoxical, but despite the doubling of the pawns, the rook endgame is advantageous to Black. The variation 36 ♘xf5+?! gxf5 37 ♖d4 f4 38 g4 *(38 ♔f2 ♔e6 is hopeless for White – G.K.)* 38...♖dh8 39 ♖xf4 ♖h1+ 40 ♔f2 ♖8h2+ 41 ♔g3 ♖xe1 42 ♔xh2 ♖xe5 clearly shows this. Here too White should have played 36 ♘g4!? Karpov plays on his opponent's time-trouble, but Black finds the only resource, and a quite effective one.' (Tal)

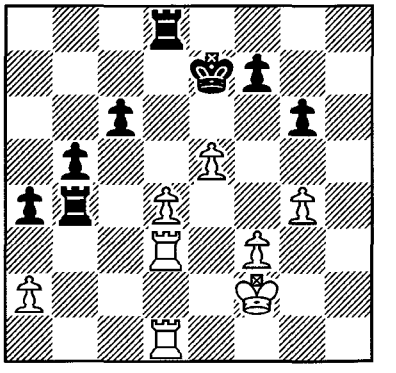
36...♖c4 ('How can one avoid remembering the move 20 b4? here,' sighs Flohr) **37 ♖d3 d4!**

Nevertheless breaking through in the centre. I think that Karpov underestimated this move too, since it involves a temporary pawn sacrifice.

38 g4 ♘g7 39 ♘xd4 (39 e6? ♘xe6 40 ♘xd4 ♔f6 Tal) **39...♘e6 40 ♖ed1**

If 40 a3, then 40...♘f4!, for example: 41 ♖de3 ♘d5 42 ♖d3 ♘xc3 43 ♖ee3 ♖dxd4 with considerable winning chances.

40...♘xd4 41 cxd4 (41 ♖xd4 ♖dxd4 42 cxd4 ♖xb4 was even worse for White) **41...♖xb4 42 ♔f2**



Here the game was adjourned. White has got rid of his weakness at c3, but now the advance of Black's queenside pawns will be extremely dangerous for him.

42...c5!?

The sealed move. 'Throughout the match the challenger had been avoiding making overcommitting continuations. On this occasion circumstances forced him to do this. There would appear to be an elementary win by 42...♖b2+ 43 ♖1d2 (43 ♖3d2? ♖xd4) 43...♖xd2+ 44 ♖xd2 ♔e6 45 ♔e3 c5, but after 46 f4! ♖xd4 47 ♖xd4 cxd4+ 48 ♔e4! *(but not 48 ♔xd4? b4 49 ♔c4 b3! 50 axb3 axb3 51 ♔xb3 ♔d5! – G.K.)* the pawn ending turns out to be drawn in view of 48...b4 49 f5+,' asserts

Tal in the weekly *64*, and after him Filip in *Informator*.

And Flohr in the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* altogether buried the challenger, stating that 'in the event of 46 dxc5 *(? – G.K.)* 46...♖xd2 47 ♔xd2 ♔xe5 *(?? – G.K.)* 48 ♔c3 ♔d5 49 ♔b4 ♔c6 50 g5! White wins.' However, 47...♔d5! 48 f4 b4! produces directly the opposite result: 49 ♔d3 ♔xc5 50 f5 (50 ♔d2 ♔d4) 50...g5! 51 e6 fxe6 52 f6 ♔d6 53 ♔c4 b3 54 axb3 a3!, or 49 g5 ♔xc5 50 f5 gxf5 51 e6 ♔d6 52 exf7 ♔e7 53 g6 f4 and Black wins.

This suggests the idea that after 46 f4 the immediate 46...b4! is stronger, since 47 dxc5? ♖xd2 48 ♔xd2 is bad on account of 48...♔d5! (see above). The rook endgame after 47 ♔e4 f5+! 48 exf6 ♔xf6 49 d5 b3 50 axb3 axb3 51 ♖b2 ♖b8 is also difficult for White, for example: 52 ♔d3 ♖b4 53 ♔c3 (53 f5 g5) 53...♖xf4 54 ♖xb3 ♔e5, or 52 g5+ ♔e7 53 ♔e5 ♔d7! 54 f5 (54 ♖b1 ♖e8+! 55 ♔f6 c4) 54...gxf5 55 g6 ♖e8+ 56 ♔xf5 c4 57 g7 ♔d6 58 ♔f6 ♖g8 and wins.

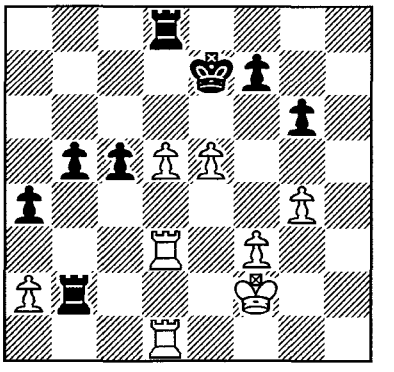
Taking into account the enormous fatigue after the sharp time scramble and five hours of tense play (as well as the two and a half months of match stress), it was impossible to calculate accurately all the variations at the board. And Korchnoi preferred another move, which also sets White unpleasant problems. This decision was not an easy one, and he made it only after lengthy and agonising hesitation. This is not surprising: a step away from defeat in the match, to allow the opponent to create a pair of mobile pawns in the centre! After writing down his move, he twice removed his score-sheet from the envelope in which it was to be sealed. As a result, for the next 14 moves on the resumption he had only 22 minutes left. However, this proved sufficient for victory...

43 d5

After 43 dxc5 ♖xd3 44 ♖xd3 ♖b2+ 45 ♔e3 ♖xa2 Black has an easily won rook endgame: 46 c6 ♖c2 47 ♖d5 ♖xc6 48 ♖xb5 ♖a6 49 ♖b2 a3 50 ♖a2 g5. '43 ♔e3 c4 is unpromising for White.' (Tal). Therefore Karpov tries to create a counterattack, even at the cost of a pawn.

'When I set off to the resumption, I was sure that with accurate play Karpov would be able to save the game. But in my time-trouble he continued playing at blitz speed and twice missed a certain draw,' wrote Korchnoi in his book *Antichess*. However, after thorough analysis neither Karpov in Baguio, nor I more than quarter of a century later, have been able to find this 'certain draw' for White!

43...♖b2+



44 ♔g3

44 ♖3d2 probably did not appeal to Karpov on account of 44...a3! 45 ♔e3 b4 46 f4 c4, and Black's pawns are far more dangerous than White's: 47 f5 gxf5 48 gxf5 ♖xd2 49 ♖xd2 b3 50 f6+ ♔e8 (the counterplay in the centre has clearly proved ineffective) 51 ♔d4 b2 52 ♖d1 c3 53 ♔xc3 ♖xd5 and wins. However, in the game too White's counterplay is too late.

44...♖xa2 (the most forceful, although 44...g5 is also good, not allowing the opponent to create a mobile pawn chain) **45 ♖e3**

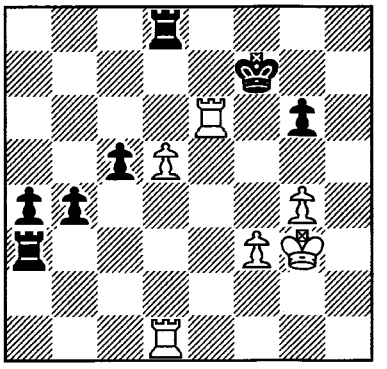
'It was this possibility that White was counting on, when sacrificing the pawn. Now lines are opened for the rook. This last move would appear to have come as a surprise to Korchnoi – out of his remaining twenty minutes he thought for ten.' (Tal)

45...b4 46 e6 ♖a3 47 ♖e2

47 ♖xa3!? bxa3 48 exf7 (Filip) was perhaps the best chance, but even here after 48...♖b8!

White is lost: 49 ♔f4 a2, 49 ♖a1(d3) ♖b3, or 49 d6+ ♔xf7 etc.

47...fxe6 48 ♖xe6+ ♔f7



49 ♖de1

'Both players were tired. After 49 g5 White would have retained the possibility of developing his initiative. Black might have been able to parry the attack, but at the least he would have had to fully mobilise himself.' (Tal)

'If Tal reproaches Karpov for the missed opportunity 49 g5, the question arises: was the position after 48...♔f7 really not reached by the trainers in their analysis of the adjourned position?!', asks Flohr in surprise, and he suggests 49...♖d7, 'after which the winning method for Black is similar to the continuation in the game.' And not really so complicated: if, for example, 50 ♖c6, then 50...b3! 51 ♖xc5 b2 and wins.

49...♖d7!

Neutralising White's threats. Black would have thrown away the win with 49...♖xd5? 50 ♖e7+ ♔f8 (50...♔f6? 51 ♖1e6+ ♔g5 52 ♖g7 and wins – Filip) 51 ♖e8+ ♔g7 52 ♖1e7+ ♔h6 53 ♖f7! ♖ad3 54 ♔h4! g5+ 55 ♔g3 ♖d6 56 ♖h8+ ♔g6 57 ♖hh7, whereas now his queenside pawns are irresistible.

50 ♖b6 (or 50 g5 ♖d3) **50...♖d3 51 ♖ee6 ♖3xd5 52 ♖xg6 a3 53 ♖bf6+ ♔e7 54 ♖e6+ ♔f8 55 ♖ef6+ ♔e7 56 ♖e6+ ♔d8 57 ♖a6 ♖b7 58 ♖g8+ ♔c7 59 ♖g7+ ♖d7 60 ♖g5 b3 61 ♖xc5+ ♔b8 0-1**

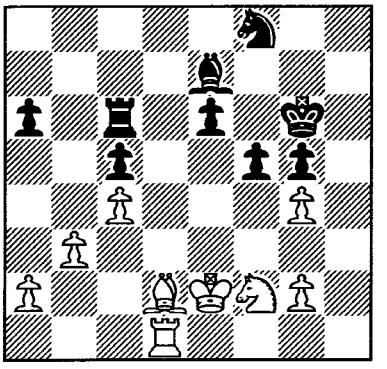
White resigned, and the score became 5-3.

This was the champion's only loss in Baguio with the white pieces. 'Korchnoi played this game with great fervour,' commented Tal, while Baturinsky admitted: 'Karpov's loss in the 28th game was to some extent natural; it was Korchnoi's best game of the match.' As though the 21st had not occurred...

In the words of Karpov, he succeeded in tuning himself up for the next game, 'but unforeseen circumstances spoiled my fighting mood and forced me to "overheat" for too long in anticipation of the next clash.' An hour before the start of play, the organisers announced a technical postponement (on account of problems with the electricity supply), and two days later a last time-out was claimed by Korchnoi, 'who had allegedly got sun-burnt while bathing in the ocean', and who then recovered with the help of the yogis. For a month, without leaving the villa, 'they worked selflessly, strengthening his physical condition and fighting spirit.' Korchnoi was very happy with the yogis: 'With their appearance Zukhar began to wither literally before my eyes!'

As a result the 29th game was played only after an interval of a week. Its opening was not altogether usual: **1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 e4!?** (previously Korchnoi had played only 3 d4 or 3 ♘f3) **3...c5 4 e5 ♘g8 5 d4 cxd4 6 ♕xd4 ♘c6 7 ♕e4 d6 8 ♘f3 dxe5 9 ♘xe5 ♘f6** (not allowing the exchange of the bishop: 9...♗d7 10 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 11 ♗g5 Geller-Filip, Gothenburg Interzonal 1955) **10 ♘xc6 ♕b6 11 ♕f3 bxc6,** and the weakness of the c-pawn condemned Black to a lengthy and unpleasant defence in a slightly inferior position. 'Again I was able to find a variation about which the world champion had no idea! He spent more than an hour on his first nine moves, but he was still unable to find a way to equalise,' writes Korchnoi. 'During the resumption, again in my time-trouble, he deviated from the correct course and lost.'

Game 32
V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov
World Championship Match,
Baguio 1978, 29th game



47...♗d6?!

Six moves after the resumption, having gained equality, Karpov begins to commit inaccuracies. First, 'after 47...♘h7! 48 ♘d3 ♗d6 Black has no reason for complaint: 49 ♗c3 ♘f6 50 ♗e5 ♘e4 51 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 52 ♘e5+ ♔g7!' (Tal), and second, 47...♗f6 or 47...♖d6 was also not bad.

48 ♗c3 ♘d7?

Tal and Filip pass over this move in silence, although it is after this that things become difficult for Black. 48...♖b6 49 ♔f3! was also insufficient, but he could have defended by 48...♗c7! with the idea of ...♖d6.

49 gxf5+ exf5 50 g4! ♘b6

50...♗e5 (50...fxg4? 51 ♘e4) is unfavourable: 51 ♖xd7 ♗xc3 52 gxf5+ ♔xf5 53 ♖d5+ ♔f4 54 ♘d3+ (Tal and Filip suggest 54 ♘h3+, but here 54...♔g4 55 ♘xg5 ♗d4 56 ♘e4 a5 is not altogether clear) 54...♔g4 55 ♘xc5 etc.

51 ♔f3 ♗e7 (51...♗c7 52 ♖e1!) **52 ♗a5?!**

Time-trouble. 52 ♘d3! was very strong.

52...♖f6! 53 ♔g2 fxg4

After 53...♘c8 (Filip), 54 ♖d7 is possible, and if 54...fxg4, then 55 ♖c7 ♖f8 56 ♘xg4 with good winning chances.

54 ♘xg4 ♖e6 55 ♔f3 ♗f6 (55...♘c8 56 ♖d5!?)

56 ♘xf6! ♖xf6+ 57 ♔g4 ♘c8?!

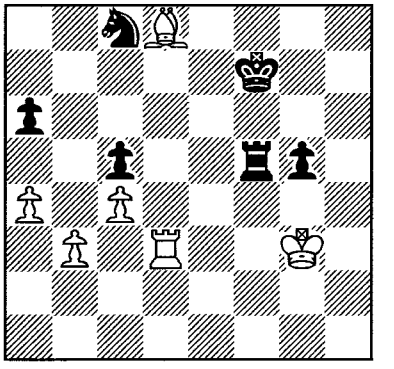
'57...♘xc4 58 bxc4 ♖f4+ 59 ♔g3 ♖xc4 was the alternative defence, but for the moment Black does not need to take a risk.' (Tal). Especially since after 60 ♖d2 ♖a4 61 ♗b6 c4 62 ♔f3 c3 63 ♖g2 or 62...g4+ 63 ♔e3 he would probably have lost. But he should have included 57...♖f4+!, and only after 58 ♔g3 replied 58...♘c8.

58 ♗d8?! (58 ♗c7! ♘e7 59 ♗d6 was more accurate, with an obvious advantage) **58...♖f4+ 59 ♔g3 ♖f5** (59...♖d4? 60 ♖xd4 cxd4 61 ♔g4 ♘d6 62 ♗xg5 and wins) **60 a4 ♔f7?**

'Perhaps the decisive mistake,' thinks Tal, who recommends 60...♖e5 (after which, however, 61 ♔g4 ♖e4+ 62 ♔f3 ♖f4+ 63 ♔e3 is good) or 60...♖f7, which 'would still have retained possibilities of resisting: 61 ♖d5 ♖f5 62 ♖d7 ♖f7 63 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 64 ♗xg5 ♔e6 followed by ...♘b6-d7.'

61 ♖d3?!

61 ♗c7 or 61 ♖e1! looks more unpleasant for Black.



61...♖e5?

61...♘e7? 62 ♖d6! was also bad, but '61...♔g6 made sense' (Tal), after which White could have played 62 ♖d7 or 62 a5 ♖e5 63 ♔f3.

62 ♔g4 ♔g6 63 a5! ♖e4+ 64 ♔f3 ♖f4+ (or 64...♖h4 65 ♖d5 etc.) **65 ♔e3 ♖h4** (65...♖f5 66 ♔e4 g4 67 ♗h4 and wins) **66**

♖d5 ♖h3+ 67 ♔d2 ♖xb3 68 ♖xc5 ♖b8 69 ♖c6+ ♔f5 70 ♖xa6 g4 71 ♖f6+ ♔e4 72 ♗c7 ♖b2+ 73 ♔c3 ♖b7 74 ♗h2 ♖h7 75 ♗b8 ♖b7 76 ♗g3 ♖b1 77 ♖f4+ ♔e3 78 ♖f8 ♘e7 79 a6 1-0

Black resigned, and the score became 5-4!

In the 30th game Karpov played 1 c4 and after protracted manoeuvring an equal rook ending was reached. The game was adjourned, but not resumed: the contestants agreed a draw through the arbiter intermediary. Korchnoi: 'Oh, what went on in those days in the Soviet camp! High-ranking officials – Ivonin (the state boss of Soviet chess), the cosmonaut Sevastyanov (the, so to speak, social boss – the Chairman of the Federation) had already been for a long time in Baguio, impatiently awaiting the concluding banquet. But there was still no banquet!...'

And then came the day of the memorable, long-suffering 31st game. The opening of it did not herald any play on a grand scale. After **1 c4** Karpov did not want to allow a repetition of the 29th game, and for the first time he replied **1...e6 2 ♘c3 d5**, while Korchnoi, for the first time in the entire history of meetings with his young opponent, employed the quiet Carlsbad Variation: **3 d4 ♘f6 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♗g5 ♗e7 6 e3 0-0 7 ♗d3 ♘bd7 8 ♘f3 ♖e8 9 ♕c2 c6 10 0-0 ♘f8 11 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 12 b4 ♗g4 13 ♘d2 ♖c8 14 ♗f5 ♗xf5 15 ♕xf5 ♕d7 16 ♕xd7 ♘xd7 17 a4 ♗e7 18 ♖fb1 ♘f6 19 a5!?** (in words of Tal, it was this 'questionable move which in the end brought White success') **19...a5 20 ♘a4** etc.

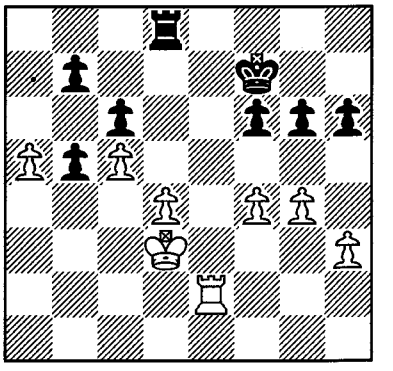
Yes, Korchnoi abandoned the traditional minority attack b2-b4-b5, rightly assuming that Black would parry it by ...c6-c5. Instead of this he chose a rare, unusual plan – he fixed the queenside pawns, gaining a powerful outpost at c5 for his knight and the possibility of preparing a breakthrough in the centre by e3-e4. A similar plan occurred in the game Andersson-Kasparov (2nd matchgame, Belgrade 1985), except that there the queens were still on the board and e3-e4 led to double-edged play. But in the endgame the white king can go to d3, whereas Black's does not have such a good post in the centre – and in the end this factor proves virtually decisive!

Korchnoi made the correct psychological reckoning that unhurried manoeuvring with the impending strategic threat of e3-e4 would be the most unpleasant for his opponent. Of course, Karpov wanted somehow to open up the position and achieve greater clarity, but he was obliged to wait... Korchnoi played e3-e4 only after the time control, on the 41st move! And Karpov, who had an enormous reserve of time, did not want to adjourn the game in an undetermined position, and he decided to try his luck: 'I replied within literally a few seconds. He made his 42nd move, and I immediately replied...' As a result, exchanges took place, and by the time that the game was adjourned a difficult rook ending for Black had been reached.

Game 33

V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov

World Championship Match, Baguio 1978, 31st game

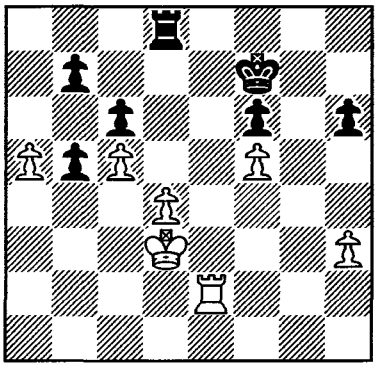


47 f5!

'The pawn duo at c5 and f5 greatly restricts the mobility of the black king. Here the game was adjourned and Karpov, taking the remaining time on his clock, sealed his next move.

Analysis showed that Black's position was very dangerous. On the resumption (not for the first time) the unforeseen occurred. Initially the challenger missed a number of strongest continuations, but at the moment when the draw was close at hand, the champion made a serious error.' (Tal)

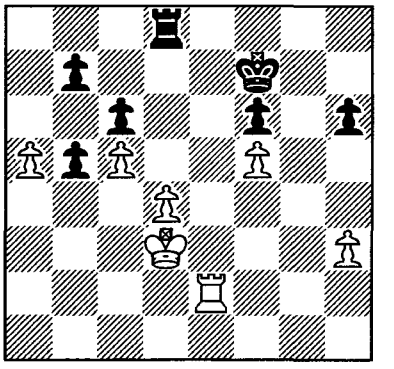
47...gxf5 48 gxf5



Now Black all the time has to reckon with the possible breakthroughs a5-a6 and d4-d5. But is White's advantage sufficient for a win? In his very interesting and high-quality book *Practical Rook Endings* (Olms 1999) Korchnoi devoted 21 pages to an analysis of this exceptionally complicated ending! And in the end he came to the conclusion that Black could nevertheless have defended. But I will venture to assert that *his position is already lost* (although, who knows, perhaps this verdict will also be disputed?).

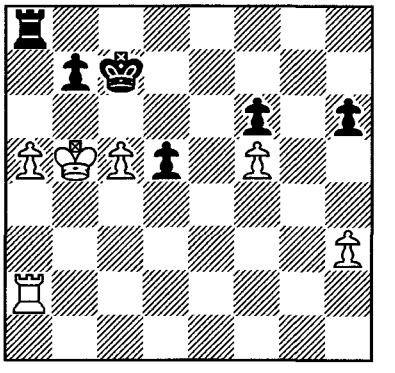
In my view, in certain supposedly drawn lines given by Korchnoi, White can gain a decisive advantage with subtle and unexpected play. For a start it is important to understand, and Korchnoi explains this well in his book, why in general White is playing for a win. In particular this is due to the difference in the placement of the kings: White's can become very active (both after the pawn sacrifice d4-d5 and ♔d4, and after the manoeuvre to b4 followed by d4-d5 or a5-a6 and ♔a5), whereas Black's is cramped by the f5- and c5-pawns, and the first check on the 7th rank will force it to retreat to the 8th. The sum of these positional factors allows White to go in for material sacrifices, since in some variations even one passed pawn suffices for a win: in view of the remoteness of Black's king, he is forced to give up his rook for it, and his counterplay is usually too late...

Now let us see how events developed in this truly historic ending.



48...♖g8

'48...♖a8 was passive – after 49 ♖a2 White would have played his king to b4, threatening the breakthroughs d4-d5 and a5-a6.' (Tal). There could have followed 49...♔e7 50 ♔c3 ♔d7 51 ♔b4 ♔c7 52 d5 cxd5 (after 52...♖e8? 53 d6+ White has a decisive positional advantage, and Korchnoi convincingly demonstrates a win) 53 ♔xb5



Analysis diagram

with the following main variations:

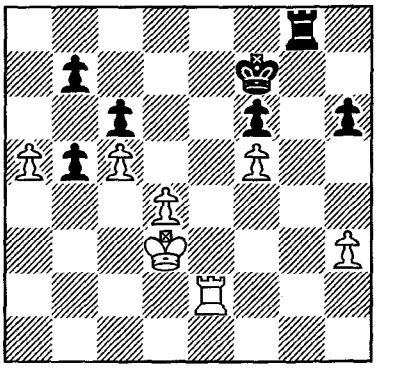
1) 53...d4 54 ♖e2 ♖d8 55 ♖e7+ ♔c8 56 ♔b6 d3 57 ♖c7+ ♔b8 58 ♖xb7+ ♔c8 59 ♖c7+ ♔b8 60 a6 d2 61 ♖b7+ ♔a8 62 c6, or 54...♖g8 55 ♖e7+ ♔c8 56 ♔b6 (activity of the king!) 56...d3 57 c6! bxc6 58 a6 ♔b8 59 ♖d7 c5 60 ♔xc5 (after all the pawn exchanges, White retains his highly important f5-pawn and his king simply goes to pick up material on the kingside) 60...♖g1 61 ♖xd3 ♖c1+ 62 ♔b6 ♖b1+ 63 ♔c6 ♖a1 64 ♔d7 ♖xa6 65 ♔e7 ♔c7 66 ♖d7+ ♔c8 67 ♖d6 and wins (Korchnoi);

2) 53...♖e8! (this is far more interesting) 54 ♖g2! (Korchnoi's 54 a6 bxa6+ 55 ♖xa6, hoping for 55...♖e3? 56 ♖c6+, does not win on account of 55...♖b8+! 56 ♖b6 ♖b7!, and if 57 ♔a6, then 57...♖b8 58 ♖xf6 d4 with an easy draw: 59 ♖d6 d3 60 ♖xd3 ♔c6) 54...♖e3 (54...♖d8? is weaker: 55 ♖g6 ♖d7 56 ♖xf6 d4 57 ♖e6 d3 58 ♖e1 d2 59 ♖d1 ♖d4 60 f6 etc.) 55 ♖g7+ ♔b8 (if 55...♔c8 there follows 56 a6! bxa6+ 57 ♔c6 ♔b8 58 ♔d6 d4 59 c6 ♖c3 60 ♖b7+ ♔c8 61 ♖f7 ♔b8 62 ♖xf6 d3 63 ♔d7 and wins) 56 a6! (the only way!) 56...bxa6+, and White has two tempting continuations:

a) 57 ♔c6!? (perhaps the stronger) 57...d4 58 ♖g6 ♖xh3 59 ♖xf6 a5 60 ♔d7, and the d-pawn is restrained by the rook from d6, after which the combined advance of the c- and f-pawns is decisive;

b) 57 ♔xa6 ♖xh3 (57...♖b3 58 ♖f7) 58 ♔b6 ♖b3+ 59 ♔c6 d4 60 ♖f7 ♖a3 (60...d3 61 ♖xf6 d2 62 ♖d6 ♖f3 63 ♖xd2 ♖xf5 64 ♔b6 ♔c8 65 ♖a2 and wins) 61 ♖f8+ ♔a7 62 ♔d7 ♖a5 63 c6 ♖d5+ (63...d3 64 c7 d2 65 ♖a8+ ♔b6 66 ♖b8+ ♔a7 67 ♖b7+ ♔a6 68 ♖b1 and c8♕, winning) 64 ♔e6 ♖c5 65 ♔xf6 ♖xc6+ 66 ♔e5 ♖c1 67 ♔xd4, and although at the cost of enormous efforts Black has managed to eliminate the c-pawn, he is literally one tempo short of being able to neutralise the f-pawn: 67...♖f1 68 f6 h5 69 ♔e5 h4 70 ♖h8 ♖e1+ 71 ♔f5 ♖f1+ 72 ♔e6 ♖e1+ 73 ♔d7 ♖f1 74 ♔e7 ♖e1+ 75 ♔f8 ♖h1 76 f7 h3 77 ♔e7 and wins.

However, let us return to the no less fascinating position from the game.



49 ♔c3?!

According to Korchnoi, he made this third-rate move on psychological grounds: it could be assumed that in their home analysis the Karpov team had not devoted sufficient attention to it.

The 49 d5? breakthrough was premature in view of 49...♖d8! 50 d6 ♖e8, when the pawn endgame is drawn, and otherwise the black rook goes to e5, attacking the c5- and f5-pawns. But, as all the commentators remarked, two 'more dangerous moves for Black' suggested themselves – 49 ♖a2 and 49 ♖e6:

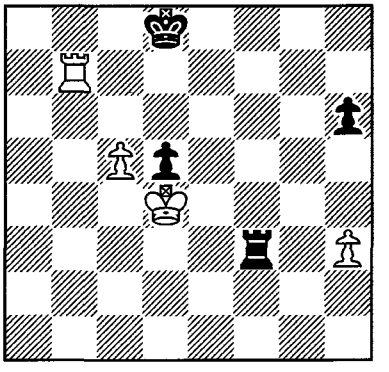
1) 49 ♖a2 (with the idea of a5-a6, exchanging the b7-pawn and attacking the c6-pawn) 49...♖g3+ 50 ♔e4 ♖xh3 51 a6 (51 d5 can be met either by Korchnoi's move 51...b4, or by 51...♖h4+ 52 ♔f3 ♖d4! 53 dxc6 bxc6 54 a6 ♖d8 with a draw) 51...bxa6 52 ♖xa6 ♖h4+ 53 ♔d3 ♖h3+ 54 ♔d2, and now it is bad to play 54...b4? 55 ♖xc6 b3 56 ♖d6! or 54...h5? 55 ♖xc6 h4 56 ♖c7+! (this is more forceful than Korchnoi's plan 56 ♖b6 ♖f3 57 ♖xb5 h3 58 c6 h2 59 ♖b7+ ♔e8 60 ♖h7 ♔d8 61 ♖xh2 ♖xf5 62 ♔d3 etc.) 56...♔e8 57 c6 with a decisive breakthrough (57...♖f3 58 ♖f7 ♔d8 59 ♖xf6 h3 60 d5 h2 61 d6 and wins), but Black is rescued by 54...♖h2+! 55 ♔c3 ♖h3+ 56 ♔b4 ♖d3 57 ♖xc6 ♖xd4+ (Black's counterplay comes just in time: he is able to activate his king) 58

♔xb5 ♖d5 59 ♖c7+ ♔e8 60 ♔b6 ♖xf5 61 ♖b7 ♖f2 62 c6 ♖b2+ 63 ♔a7 ♖c2 64 c7 ♔d7! 65 ♔b8 ♔e6 66 ♖b5 f5 (by giving up one of his pawns, Black breaks through with his king to the kingside) 67 c8♕+ ♖xc8+ 68 ♔xc8 f4 69 ♔c7 f3 70 ♔c6 f2 71 ♖b1 ♔f5 72 ♖f1 h5 73 ♖xf2+ ♔g4 74 ♔d5 ♔g3 with a draw.

On the basis of this variation, Korchnoi correctly concluded in his analysis that the move 49 ♖a2 was insufficient for a win, and he proceeded to an analysis of the following energetic continuation, which had also, without any doubt, been thoroughly studied in the Karpov camp;

2) 49 ♖e6! The same plan of creating connected passed pawns, but without losing time on the capture of the a6-pawn: after a5-a6 and ...bxa6 White captures on c6 immediately, and this tempo, in my view, proves decisive. For example:

a) 49...♖a8 50 ♖d6! ♔e7 51 d5 ♖xa5 (51...cxd5 52 ♖b6 ♖xa5 53 ♖xb7+ ♔d8 54 ♔d4 is bad for Black) 52 ♖e6+! ♔d7 53 ♖xf6 b4 54 ♔c4 b3! (a very sharp position!) 55 ♖f7+ ♔c8 56 ♔xb3 cxd5 (Korchnoi also gives a detailed analysis of 56...♖xc5 57 d6, winning) 57 f6 ♖a1 (57...♖b5+ 58 ♔c3 ♖xc5+ 59 ♔d4 ♖c1 60 ♖e7 ♔d8 61 ♔xd5 b5 62 ♔e6 and wins) 58 ♖e7! (58 ♔c3 is weaker: 58...♖f1 59 ♔d4 ♖f5 60 h4 h5 61 ♖h7 ♖xf6 62 ♔e5 ♖g6 and ...b7-b6 with a draw) 58...♔d8 59 ♔c3 ♖f1 60 ♖xb7 ♖xf6 61 ♔d4 ♖f3.



Analysis diagram

In Korchnoi's opinion, this is a draw: 62 ♔xd5 ♖xh3 63 ♔c6 ♔c8! However, White has the fearfully strong move 62 h4!!, forcing the black rook to take up an unfortunate position: after 62...♖f5 he wins by 63 c6! ♔c8 64 ♖h7 h5 65 ♔c5 d4+ 66 ♔b6, if 62...♖h3 he has 63 ♔e5! (retaining the d5-pawn: it covers the king against checks) 63...d4 64 ♔d6 ♔c8 65 ♖h7 ♖c3 66 c6 ♔b8 67 ♔d7 d3 68 ♖xh6 and ♖d6, restraining the d-pawn and advancing his own pawns, or 62...♖f4+ 63 ♔e5! ♖g4 64 ♔d6 ♖g6+ 65 ♔xd5 ♖g4 66 h5 ♖g1 (chasing after the h5-pawn allows the murderous ♔d6) 67 ♖h7 and wins;

b) 49...♖g3+ (forced) 50 ♔e4! (50 ♔d2?! ♖a3 51 d5 ♖xa5 52 dxc6 bxc6 53 ♖xc6 ♖a4 54 ♖b6 ♖f4 with a draw) 50...♖xh3 51 a6! (if 51 d5 ♖h4+ 52 ♔d3 Black is saved by 52...♖a4 and ...♖xa5) 51...♖h4+ 52 ♔e3 ♖h3+ 53 ♔f4 bxa6 54 ♖xc6, and Black has a choice:

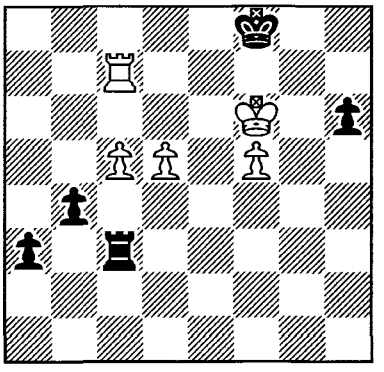
b1) 54...♖h4+ 55 ♔e3 a5 56 ♖b6 b4 57 ♖b5! (this way, rather than 57 ♖b7+ ♔e8 58 c6 ♔d8 59 ♔d3, since here, instead of 59...a4? 60 d5! ♖h1 61 ♔c4 and wins as given by Korchnoi, there is the reply 59...b3! with unclear play) 57...b3 58 ♖xa5, eliminating one of the black pawns, after which the other is no longer dangerous, and the pair of white pawns quickly decides the outcome: 58...♔e7 59 ♖b5 ♖h2 60 ♔e4 b2 61 ♔d5;

b2) 54...a5 55 ♔e4 ♖c3 (55...a4 56 ♖b6!; 55...b4 56 ♖a6!) 56 ♔d5. Another very sharp position with passed pawns for both sides. White's decisive advantage is that his pawns are supported by his king and can always create threats to the enemy king. If 56...h5, then 57 ♖c7+ ♔g8 58 ♔e6! h4 59 ♔xf6 h3 60 ♖g7+, for example: 60...♔h8 61 ♖g4! ♔h7 62 d5! ♖xc5 63 d6 ♖d5 (Korchnoi) 64 ♖h4+ ♔g8 65 ♔e6 ♖d3 66 d7 h2 (66...♖e3+ 67 ♔d5 ♖d3+ 68 ♖d4) 67 ♖xh2 ♖e3+ 68 ♔f6 ♖d3 69 ♖g2+ ♔f8 70 ♖g7 ♖d6+ 71 ♔e5 ♖d1 72 ♖h7, or 60...♔f8 61 d5! ♖xc5 62 ♖a7 (White has given up his c-pawn, but his d- and f-pawns are sufficient) 62...♖c8 (62...♔e8 63 ♔e6) 63 ♖h7 ♔g8 64 ♖xh3 ♖d8 (Korchnoi) 65 ♖d3

♔f8 66 d6 ♔e8 67 ♔e6, and Black's queenside pawns have not even managed to advance.

56...b4 is stronger, with the idea of 57 ♖a6? h5 58 ♖xa5 b3 (diverting White's attention with the help of the a- and b-pawns) 59 ♖a7+ ♔f8! 60 ♔e6 h4 61 ♔xf6 (61 ♖f7+ ♔g8 62 ♔xf6 h3) 61...♔e8 62 d5 h3 63 c6 ♔d8 64 ♔e6 b2! with a draw (Korchnoi).

However, here too White can win with a cunning intermediate check – 57 ♖c7+! After 57...♔g8 now 58 ♖a7 h5 59 ♖xa5 b3 60 ♖a1! is good, while if 57...♔f8, then 58 ♔e6 (but not 58 ♖a7? b3 59 ♖xa5 h5 etc.) 58...a4 (or 58...b3 59 d5 and ♔xf6) 59 d5 a3 60 ♔xf6 leads to the same situation, where the power of the passed pawns is combined with mating threats to the king.



Analysis diagram

There is no way of saving the game: 60...♔g8 61 ♖g7+ ♔h8 62 ♖a7, or 60...♔e8 61 ♖a7 b3 62 ♖xa3 b2 63 ♖a8+ ♔d7 64 ♖b8 ♖xc5 65 ♖xb2 ♖xd5 66 ♖b7+, and although Black has exchanged his a- and b-pawns for the white c- and d-pawns, the resulting ending with f-pawn against h-pawn is hopeless for him.

Thus the given analysis of the variations with 49 ♖e6! shows that the adjourned position was nevertheless won for White. In reaching this conclusion I was helped not only by a computer, but also in the first instance by intuition. After making a careful study of Korchnoi's deep analysis, I was imbued with the persistent feeling that White's positional advantage in this original endgame should be sufficient for a win. And subsequent searches confirmed this...

As for 49 ♔c3?!, the move made in the game, it objectively throws away the win, although it sets a clever trap.

49...♖e8?!

'Since the pawn endgame is drawn, the rook occupies the important open file. After 49...♖g3+? 50 ♔b4 ♖xh3 Black faces retribution for his "pawn-grabbing": 51 d5 cxd5 52 c6 bxc6 53 a6 and the a-pawn cannot be stopped.' (Tal). However, after 53...♖h4+ 54 ♔c5 ♖a4 (Kan) 55 ♔b6 b4 56 a7 c5 57 ♔b7 c4 58 ♖e6 ♖xa7+ 59 ♔xa7 c3 60 ♖c6 d4 it is not Black who loses, but White! Instead of 52 c6? the correct move is 52 ♖e6! ♖f3 53 ♖b6 ♖xf5 54 ♖xb7+ ♔e6 55 a6 ♖f1 56 a7 ♖a1 57 c6, winning. But a move earlier Black too can play more strongly: 51...♖h4+! 52 ♔b3 ♖h3+ 53 ♔b2 cxd5 (Kan), gaining a draw: 54 c6 bxc6 55 a6 ♖h4 56 ♔b3 c5 57 ♖a2 ♖h3+, or 54 ♖e6 b4! 55 ♖b6 ♖a3 56 ♖xb7+ ♔e8 57 c6 ♔d8 58 ♖f7 ♖xa5 59 ♖xf6 ♔c7.

Where then is the win for White? It is pointed out by Korchnoi: 51 a6! bxa6 52 d5! The triumph of the main idea! Black has two replies:

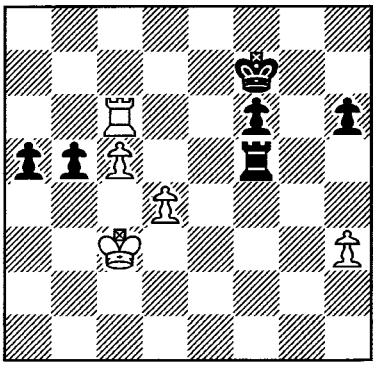
1) 52...cxd5 53 c6 ♖h4+ 54 ♔c5 ♖c4+ 55 ♔xd5 a5 (55...♖c1 56 ♔d6 and wins – Korchnoi) 56 ♔d6! (Korchnoi's plan 56 ♖b2 ♖c1 57 ♖xb5 is insufficient on account of 57...♔e7!) 56...b4 57 ♖c7+ ♔f8 58 ♖a7 b3 59 c7, and White wins, by exploiting the power of his passed c-pawn and the retained f5-pawn. Black is not helped by 53...♖g3 54 c7 ♖g4+ 55 ♔c5 ♖c4+ 56 ♔d6 d4 57 ♔d7 d3 58 ♖d2 ♖d4+ 59 ♔c6 ♖c4+ 60 ♔b7;

2) 52...♖h4+ 53 ♔a5 cxd5 54 ♖c2 d4! (Korchnoi rejects 54...♔e7 because of 55 c6 ♔d8 56 ♔b6 ♔c8 57 ♖g2, when the rook invades decisively along the g-file) 55 c6 d3, and now not 56 c7? dxc2 57 c8♕ ♖c4 58

♕e6+ ♔f8 59 ♕xf6+ ♔e8 60 ♕e6+ ♔d8! 61 ♕d6+ ♔c8 62 ♕xa6+ ♔c7 63 ♕b6+ ♔c8 64 ♕e6+ ♔d8 with a draw (Korchnoi), but only 56 ♖d2! ♖c4 57 ♔b6, gaining a win: 57...b4 (57...♔e7 58 ♖xd3) 58 ♖xd3 a5 59 c7 a4 60 ♖d7+ ♔e8 61 ♖d6 (threatening ♖c6) 61...♖xc7 62 ♔xc7 a3 63 ♖a6 h5 64 ♔d6 (the king calmly returns and picks up the pawns – just in time!) 65...h4 65 ♔c5 h3 66 ♔xb4 h2 67 ♖e6+ ♔f7 68 ♖e1.

To complete the picture, we should mention that Black is also not saved by 50...♖d3 (instead of 50...♖xh3) 51 a6! ♖xd4+ 52 ♔a5 ♖a4+ 53 ♔b6 or 51...bxa6 52 ♔a5 ♖xd4 53 ♔xa6 b4 54 ♔b6 b3 55 ♔xc6 ♖b4 (55...♖c4 56 ♔d6 ♖d4+ 57 ♔c7 ♖c4 58 c6 ♖c2 59 ♖e3 b2 60 ♖b3 ♔e7 61 h4 h5 62 ♖b7! ♔e8 63 ♔d6 and wins – Korchnoi) 56 ♖b2 h5 57 ♔c7 h4 58 c6 ♔e7 59 ♔c8 ♔d6 60 c7 ♖c4 61 ♖d2+ ♔c6 62 ♔d8 ♔b7 63 ♖d7, and the curtain comes down.

Thus 49...♖g3+? would indeed have lost. But a draw could have been gained by the fairly obvious (although what can be considered obvious during the resumption of the 31st game of an exhausting match?!) 49...♖g5! (attacking the f5-pawn, which is far more important than the h3-pawn) 50 ♖e6 ♖xf5 51 a6 bxa6 52 ♖xc6 a5!



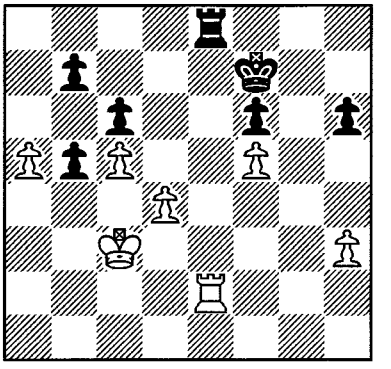
Analysis diagram

Black's position is far better than in many of the variations examined earlier, since the absence of the f5-pawn allows him to activate his king. Objectively the chances of the two sides are now roughly equal:

1) 53 ♔d3, and now a possible continuation is 53...♖f3+ 54 ♔e4 ♖xh3 55 ♖c7+ ♔g6 56 d5 f5+! (Korchnoi) 57 ♔d4 ♖h4+ 58 ♔d3 a4 59 d6 a3 60 d7 a2 61 ♖c6+! (61 d8♕? ♖h3+!) 61...♔h5 62 ♖a6 ♖a4 63 d8♕ ♖xa6 64 ♕e8+ ♔g4 65 ♕e2+ ♔g5 with a draw, although 53...a4!? is more cunning: 54 ♔e4? (54 ♖b6 is correct) 54...♖f1 55 ♖a6 f5+!, and it is now Black who is playing for a win: 56 ♔e5 f4 57 ♖a7+ ♔g6 58 ♖a5 f3! (but not Korchnoi's suggestion of 58...♔g5 59 c6 or 58...b4 59 ♖xa4 b3 60 ♖b4 with a draw) 59 ♔f4 f2 60 ♔f3 b4 61 ♖xa4 b3 62 ♖b4 ♖h1 63 ♔xf2 b2 and wins;

2) 53 ♖a6 ♖f3+ 54 ♔d2 b4 55 ♖xa5 ♔e6 with a draw (Korchnoi) or 54...a4, and White has to sacrifice a pawn: 55 d5 ♖f5 56 ♖a7+ ♔g6 57 ♔c3 ♖xd5 58 ♔b4, but this is sufficient only for a draw – 58...♖d3 etc.

Karpov's move 49...♖e8?! is also not losing, although it nevertheless leaves Black more complicated problems.



50 ♖d2

Tal recommended the move 50 ♖a2 instead. And indeed, 50...♖e3+ 51 ♔d2! (51 ♔b4 ♖d3! with a draw – Korchnoi) 51...♖xh3 52 a6 bxa6 53 ♖xa6 would have led to a position from the variation with 49 ♖a2, where Black would have had to demonstrate the only way to draw. But it should be remembered

that Korchnoi deliberately avoided this line, which had certainly been analysed in detail by his opponent's team. Perhaps it was this turn of events that Karpov was aiming for, when he played 49...♖e8. And Korchnoi, true to his psychological strategy, endeavours to finally divert his opponent from his adjournment analysis.

50...♖e4

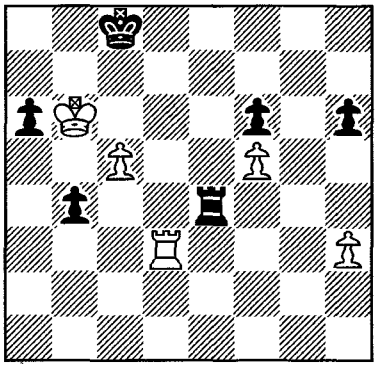
'A perfectly sound way to draw. The 51 d5 breakthrough is not dangerous for Black. The only plan to play for a win is to break through with the king on the queenside. The next few moves are forced.' (Tal)

51 ♔b4 (again Korchnoi avoids 51 ♖a2) **51...♔e8! 52 a6**

'A last attempt, which unexpectedly proves successful.' (Kan)

52...bxa6 53 ♔a5 ♔d7 54 ♔b6! b4 55 d5 (the long-awaited breakthrough, which now requires Black to defend with a certain accuracy) **55...cxd5 56 ♖xd5+ ♔c8 57 ♖d3**

Of course, not 57 c6? b3!



57...a5?

After reaching the second time control (on the 56th move) Karpov commits a fatal mistake, by making an instinctive move: he wants to active his passed pawns as quickly as possible. But Black has no time to advance them! It was essential to combine attack and defence: according to Tal, 'all Black's difficulties would have been behind him, had he played 57...♖c4! 58 c6 (58 ♖g3 ♖c3 or even 58...♔d7) 58...♖c3.'

Indeed, in this case the black rook would have successfully supported the advance of its b-pawn and restrained the advance of the enemy c-pawn. A draw follows after both 59 ♖d6 b3 60 ♖xf6 ♔d8 61 ♖d6+ ♔e7 (Korchnoi), and 59 ♖d2 b3 60 ♖g2 ♔d8 61 ♔b7 a5 62 ♖d2+ ♔e7 63 c7 a4 64 c8♕ ♖xc8 65 ♔xc8 a3 66 ♖d7+, and the strength of the black pawns obliges White to force perpetual check.

Commenting on Karpov's error, the veteran Soviet master Ilya Kan wrote: 'This rook ending will join the history of enigmas in the battle for the world championship.' In my opinion, this is artistic exaggeration: chess history knows of much greater 'enigmas' – Chigorin's terrible blunder in the 23rd game of his match with Steinitz (*Volume 1, Game No.26*), Bronstein's blackouts during the resumption of the 6th and 23rd games of his match with Botvinnik (*Volume 2, Game Nos.61 and 66*), and so on.

58 ♖g3 (and suddenly it transpires that there is no longer a draw!) **58...b3**

In Tal's opinion, 'after 58...♖c4 Black would have retained chances of saving the game.' Other commentators also recommended this 'more tenacious' move. But here too White has a clear-cut way to win: 59 c6 ♔d8 60 c7+ ♔e7 61 ♖e3+ ♔d6 62 ♖d3+ ♔e5 63 ♖d8, and after 63...b3 64 c8♕ ♖xc8 65 ♖xc8 a4 66 ♖c5+ ♔d4 67 ♖b5 ♔c4 there is the out-flanking manoeuvre 68 ♔a5 a3 69 ♖b4+! ♔c3 70 ♔a4 a2 71 ♖xb3+ ♔c2 72 ♖a3 ♔b2 73 ♔b4, transposing into a won pawn endgame.

59 ♔c6!

'By bringing up his king with gain of tempo, White wins a very important pawn.' (Tal). The outcome is decided. Karpov made a further dozen dutiful, and in the end altogether unnecessary moves.

59...♔b8 (or 59...♖d4 60 ♖xb3 a4 61 ♖g3) **60 ♖xb3+ ♔a7 61 ♖b7+ ♔a6 62 ♖b6+**

♔a7 63 ♔b5 a4 64 ♖xf6 ♖f4 65 ♖xh6 a3 66 ♖a6+ ♔b8 67 ♖xa3 ♖xf5 68 ♖g3 ♖f6 69 ♖g8+ ♔c7 70 ♖g7+ ♔c8 71 ♖h7 1-0

The scores became level: 5-5, and the fate of the match now hung by a thread.

'The phenomenal "five-five" became not only competitive, but also ideological equality: it turned out that the defector, deprived of his family and his homeland, frequently surrounded by a whole herd of "rhinos" – in conditions of freedom was capable of achieving the impossible.' (E.Sztein)

How was it that Korchnoi managed to achieve this miracle? Why, for almost the third time in a row – a unique record in his glorious career – was Karpov unable to hold an inferior ending? Of course, it is simplest to refer to the champion's tiredness. But such an explanation, in my view, belittles the feat of Korchnoi, who, although 20 years older than his opponent, tirelessly and constantly set him new problems. Of course, his fantastic drive and inventiveness, even in a hopeless match situation, also affected Karpov's condition and provoked him into making further mistakes. It is important to note that we are talking not about serious oversights and blunders, but of the gradual deterioration of position: little-by-little Korchnoi outplayed his great opponent! I think that these wins are far more weighty than the wins in complicated endings against Polugayevsky or even Spassky in the 1977 matches.

Here is the opinion of Korchnoi himself: 'What in fact happened in the second half of the match? Karpov, who had a colossal psychological, competitive, chess and, finally, political advantage, was not only unable to capitalise on it, but he lost it all along the way. The only concession to which the Soviet side agreed – to remove their psychologist out of my field of vision – cost the champion dearly. Karpov lost his best qualities, and in particular his keen psychological evaluation of the position! This is a kind of knowledge of the impression of the position that your opponent has. The ability to understand the course of his thinking – this means a great deal! It means reducing by at least a half the analysis of possible replies by the opponent, and, to put it simply, anticipating what he will do. Karpov possesses this quality more than anyone else – and he lost it! In this respect he looked so powerful in the 13th game and the first half of the 17th, but he looked equally helpless in the 29th and the 31st! It was evident that he had completely lost confidence in himself.'

Objectively speaking, it should be remarked that it was not at all because of Zukhar's absence from the front rows of the hall that Korchnoi won these three games. He fought like a lion! Some six years later his heroic example inspired me in the even more hopeless situation, which arose after the 27th game of my first match with Karpov (1984/85). And the events at the finish of the match in Baguio were to some extent a prototype of the drama that was played out in the last third of our Moscow match and especially its concluding days. However, about this in Volume 7...

Here, after the 31st game, victory in the match would go to the player who scored the first win. Karpov took a time-out and, in order to somehow dispel and reduce the stress, he travelled with Sevastyanov to Manila, where he furiously supported 'our' team in the USSR-Yugoslavia world basketball championship. And in the meantime in Baguio, 'our' other team launched a decisive offensive against the yogis – at that moment the Soviet side had everything under control.

Schmid had left after the 27th game (he had pressing matters in Germany), and was replaced on the jury by the new chief arbiter – Filip from 'fraternal' Czechoslovakia. Euwe, who had arrived for the finish of the match, also left, alas – precisely after the 31st game. 'Karpov had to wait for the departure of Euwe, the only person by whom the Soviets were slightly restrained,' writes Korchnoi. 'The President left Baguio at the most heated days

of the match, so as to put in order... the Venezuelan Chess Federation. Apparently this was more important than the question of who would become world champion. True, before his departure, in a conversation with Keene and Frau Leeuwerik, Euwe said that if the Soviets were to victimise the yogis again, he would permit me to stop the match.'

The attack began on 14th October with a press conference by Campomanes, which stated that the 'criminals' Dwyer and Shepperd were again visiting the hotel where the challenger was living and using the official match transport, and he demanded of Korchnoi 'the observance of norms of decency and respect to the organisers'. In reply Korchnoi invited journalists to his place, and under the guidance of Dada and Didi he performed a series of yoga exercises.

The next day, on the eve of the 32nd game, the Soviet delegation made a written demand to the jury that the 'criminal terrorists' should be removed from the match. Here is a noteworthy extract: 'The match organiser Mr F.Campomanes has several times officially demanded the termination of this connection and in his memorandum of 13th September *(after the 21st game – G.K.)* he warned about the possibility of terminating the match in the aim of ensuring individual and public security. However, the connection of the members of the challenger's delegation with the criminal element has continued.'

As we see, back in 1978 Campomanes and the Karpov team were conceiving *the possibility of terminating the match.* When the score became 5-5, rumours began to circulate that the Soviet delegation, concerned about the state of the champion's health, had suggested that FIDE should terminate the match – in which case Karpov would, of course, retain his title. And at some point Euwe had supposedly said to Keene that with the scores equal the match should be terminated. Such a scenario could have come about, for example, in the event of a draw in the 32nd game. It is quite possible that this idea was suggested to Dr Euwe. At any event, six and a half years later it was put into effect with the formal approach by Sevastyanov to another FIDE President – Campomanes, when he terminated my first match with Karpov in a similar situation and under the same pretext...

On the day of the 32nd game, 17th October, a crucial meeting of the jury took place, and Keene, who by that time had become the head of the challenger's delegation, 'after being obstinate for the sake of appearances, agreed to remove the yogis from Baguio'. And at two o'clock in the afternoon, without Korchnoi's knowledge – 'all the power and information was then with Keene' – they left his villa.

According to Korchnoi, when he arrived for the game the hall resembled an arena of police manoeuvres: the building was full of uniformed and plainclothes policemen. Before the game he chanced to see 'on the faces of the Soviets a suppressed sense of triumph, malicious glee.' And he went on... 'The game began. The directors of Soviet chess were sitting in the front row of the stalls, and in the 4th row was... our old acquaintance – Zukhar!' At about a quarter to eight Stean telegrammed a protest to Dr Euwe. But it was already too late... The challenger played badly and adjourned the game in a hopeless position (*Game No.77*).

The following morning 'on his own initiative' Keene phoned Filip and informed him of Korchnoi's resignation! But the latter, in turn, wrote Filip a letter: 'I shall not resume the 32nd game, But I am not going to sign the score-sheet because the game was played under absolutely illegal conditions...'

Korchnoi protested to FIDE and did not appear at the closing ceremony. 'This was also my protest against the behaviour of the Soviets and Campomanes. In a match, which was transformed into a blood battle, where with the complicity of the jury all concepts of fair play were rejected, where rules and agree-

ments were unscrupulously broken – in such a competition, even the closing ceremony turns into a place of execution for a person without rights.'

This painful defeat effectively signified the collapse of Korchnoi's hopes of ever becoming world champion. This makes it all the more surprising that, immediately after the match, whereas the young champion went off 'for a well-earned rest' (such a thing also happens nowadays), the 47-year-old challenger found in himself the strength to lead the Swiss team at the Olympiad in Buenos Aires and to achieve the best result on board one: +7=4. After all his trials in the Philippines this looked incredible! And on the results of 1978 Korchnoi was deservedly awarded the only chess 'Oscar' in his career, and therefore one that was especially precious.

Last Battle for the Throne

The strict boycott on the part of the Soviet Federation forced Korchnoi to miss at least two major tournaments in 1979 – Montreal (1-2. Karpov and Tal) and Tilburg (1. Karpov). But his performances in other events were fully at the level of a vice-world champion: a share of 1st-2nd places with Ljubojevic in Sao Paulo and Buenos-Aires (overall score: +15=11), and wins in a four-player match-tournament in South Africa and the Swiss Open Championship – 12 out of 13, 4½ points ahead of the second prize-winner.

In the winter, preparing for the next Candidates cycle, Korchnoi played in Linares (2nd-4th places) and Wijk aan Zee (3rd), seeing as there were no USSR representatives. The form he acquired helped him to comfortably overcome the first difficult barrier – the quarter-final match with Petrosian (Velden, March 1980). This was a 10-game match and Korchnoi, after winning the 5th and 9th games with seven draws, won ahead of schedule by 5½-3½. And just a month later he shared 1st-3rd places with Andersson and Miles at a tournament in London.

The next test, like three years earlier, was a semi-final match with Polugayevsky (Buenos Aires, summer 1980), this time of 'just' 12 games. This new duel proved very difficult for Korchnoi: he was quite unable to win with White! Polugayevsky, who was on the crest of a wave (he had beaten Tal in the quarter-final) put up a far more tenacious resistance than in Evian. After losing an almost level rook endgame in the 4th game, he won the 6th; after losing the 8th he drew level with the help of a brilliant novelty in the 12th (*Volume 3, Game No.27*) and again levelled the scores: 6-6.

After this the regulations stipulated two additional games, in the event of 1-1 – a further two, and if the scores were still equal the winner of the match would be the player who had won more games with Black (viz. Korchnoi).

So, a classic tie-break of two games began. In the 13th game Korchnoi was again unable to make use of the white pieces; moreover, in an uneasy endgame with knight against bishop he had to seal the only saving move! Many, including the chief arbiter Najdorf, thought that the adjourned position was lost for White, but on the resumption Korchnoi accurately forced a draw.

A highly intriguing situation arose, since Polugayevsky could be satisfied only with a win – either in the 14th game, or, in the event of a draw, in one of next two additional games. Chess fans wondered: would the Soviet grandmaster be able to repeat the miracle that he had performed in the 12th game? What happened next was eloquently described by Korchnoi's press attaché Emmanuel Sztein:

'The decisive, 14th game began on Sunday at 4 p.m. Again, we had the black pieces. What opening should be chosen? Korchnoi with his coaches, grandmasters Stean and Seirawan, had been up all night, polishing a sharp line of play in the English Opening, where Black checks with his knight at d3 and White loses the chance to castle. The variation was risky, but Korchnoi was counting on the element of

surprise: if his opponent played the old way, we would spring on him an improvement found by Michael Stean... At the same time the Hübner-Portisch match was being played in Italy, and Bent Larsen was there as correspondent for the Argentine newspaper *Clarin*. When I went out for the newspapers the next morning and opened *Clarin*, I was dumbfounded – there was the entire variation! In full! It turned out that it had been played in a game between Hübner and Portisch the previous day, which ended in a draw. But Larsen! Larsen, who was very familiar with this line of play, showed how Black could have improved. But before that he showed an improvement for White. An unpleasant surprise!

'When I returned to the hotel room, they were, of course, sitting there preparing. I showed them the newspaper, producing near panic. We didn't know what to do and were close to despair. Viktor and I went for a stroll, and at one point I said, "There's only one way out: you have to stake your all. Serov *(the leader of the Soviet delegation. – G.K.)* is unlikely to read Spanish. Nor is he likely to buy newspapers for hard currency. As for the embassy, they won't send the papers until tomorrow – after all, it's a Sunday!" Viktor was lost in thought... Finally, the game began, and – Korchnoi chose that very line of play! I said to them, "Relax." Indeed, the critical position in that line of play comes somewhere on the 14th or 15th move: it was either or... I watched Viktor rush off the stage and pace about in his cage-like rest room. He was waiting! Like a beast in ambush, waiting to pounce... Of course Polugayevsky didn't know about the newspaper – and it was effectively all over in 10 minutes! And a couple of days later Larsen wrote a piece in *Clarin* under the heading "Those who don't read Larsen land in trouble!"'

Such an amazing story could only happen, of course, in the pre-computer, pre-internet era. Polugayevsky's downfall was caused by the tortoise-like speed with which information spread... Let us analyse this dramatic game, the first 14 moves of which coincided with the 5th game of the 'parallel' Candidates match Hübner-Portisch.

Game 34
L.Polugayevsky-V.Korchnoi
Candidates Match,
Buenos Aires 1980, 14th game
English Opening A34

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 c5

In the preceding even-numbered games of the match Korchnoi played only 2...b6, resulting in the Queen's Indian Defence (*Volume 3, Game No.27*).

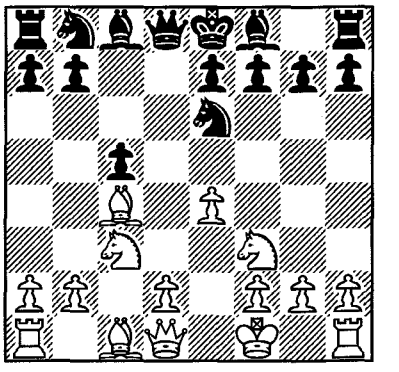
3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 (a popular move at that time) **5...♘b4 6 ♗c4 ♘d3+**

The sensational game Polugayevsky-Tal (Riga Interzonal 1979) went 6...♗e6 7 ♗xe6 ♘d3+ 8 ♔f1 fxe6 9 ♘g5 ♕b6!? 10 ♕e2? c4 with excellent play for Black (*Volume 2, Game No.145*), but already in 1980 the strong reply 10 ♕f3! had been found.

7 ♔e2 ♘f4+

The exchange 7...♘xc1+ 8 ♖xc1 has been judged to favour White since the time of Takács's games against Spielmann (Vienna 1928) and Rubinstein (Rogaska Slatina 1929), and also Botvinnik against Kasparian (1938).

8 ♔f1 ♘e6



This knight manoeuvre also used to be considered inadequate – on account of the following pawn sacrifice. However, Portisch,

and immediately after him Korchnoi and Stean, worked out a new plan of development for Black.

9 b4!?

After the quiet 9 ♘e5 (Averbakh-Bondarevsky, Moscow 1946) Black's most successful reply has been 9...g6.

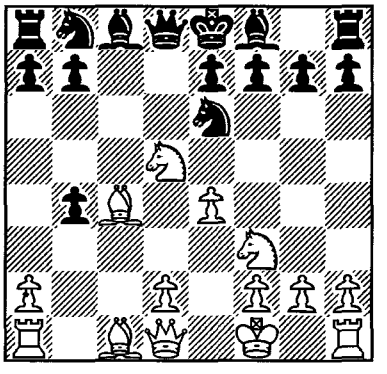
9...cxb4

Soon, following the example of Tony Miles, an interesting pawn sacrifice came to the fore – 9...g6!? 10 bxc5 ♗g7 11 ♗xe6 ♗xe6 12 d4 ♘c6 13 ♗e3 with a sharp, unclear game (Seirawan-Miles, London 1982; Kasparov-Shirov, Pestovo simultaneous 1986; Vallejo-Leko, Linares 2003). Theory has not yet given a final verdict on this variation. It is often avoided both by Black, and by White: it is too risky a venture!

10 ♘d5

At that time this was the main continuation. 'White seizes space, develops his c1-bishop on a splendid diagonal and apparently gains very good prospects. But Portisch was able to overcome this optical illusion and re-evaluate the resulting positions.' (Makarichev)

Later 10 ♘e2! was deemed to be stronger: 10...♘c7 (now 10...g6? is bad on account of 11 ♗b2 ♗g7 12 ♗xe6! ♗xb2 13 ♗xf7+) 11 d4 e6 12 h4 with excellent compensation for the pawn (Hübner-Tukmakov, Wijk aan Zee 1984; Kasparov-Grünberg, Hamburg simultaneous 1985).

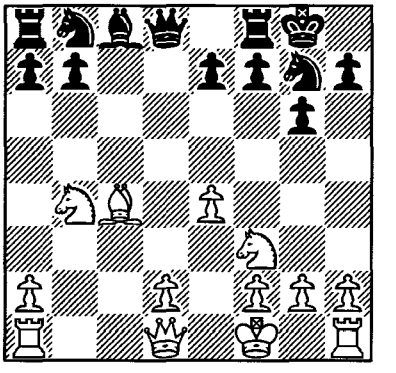


10...g6!

This discovery virtually overturned the evaluation of the position! Black solves the problem of his kingside development, and in the resulting 'Grünfeld' set-ups it is White who has to play accurately, since his predominance in the centre does not compensate for the drawbacks of his king's position at f1.

11 ♗b2 (11 a3 ♗g7 12 ♖b1 ♘c6 with equality is no better for White) **11...♗g7 12 ♗xg7 ♘xg7 13 ♘xb4 0-0**

But not immediately 13...♗g4? in view of 14 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 15 ♘e5+ or 15 ♘g5+.



14 d4?

It is strange, but both Hübner and Polugayevsky were let down by their sense of danger. The move in the game looks natural, but it allows the opponent to make an immediate attack on White's centre. And although this is not yet finally catastrophic, it was far more circumspect to play 14 h3 with equality, as recommended by Larsen and many other commentators.

14...♗g4

'Here Polugayevsky thought for 30 minutes and for the first time he "did not guess" the move made by Hübner. Indeed, things are not at all easy for White: he effectively has a "Grünfeld" with a bad king and the knight at f3 already pinned.' (Makarichev)

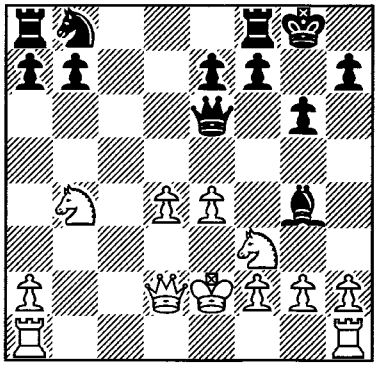
15 ♔e2?!

Hübner chose 15 ♕d2, and after 15...♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♘c6 (16...a5!?) 17 ♘xc6 bxc6 Portisch achieved a comfortable game – if 18 ♔g2 there

can follow 18...e5! 19 ♖hd1 exd4 20 ♕xd4 ♕h4. The continuation was 18 f4?! e6 19 ♕e3 ♕f6 20 ♗e2 ♖fd8 21 ♖d1 ♖ab8 22 a3 ♖b2 23 ♔g2 ♖db8 24 ♖he1 ♖8b3 25 ♖d3 (25 ♕c1 ♕h4) 25...♖xd3 26 ♕xd3 (or 26 ♗xd3 ♘h5 27 f5 ♕h4) 26...♕xf4 and Black should have won. But Hübner miraculously managed to save the game (and in the end, after a series of draws, he won the match: 6½-4½).

In the opinion of grandmaster Makarichev, 'White should have played 15 d5 and begun the withdrawal of his forces (bishop to e2, b4-knight via the route c2-e3 or d3-e5), avoiding losses if possible.' But here too after 15...♘d7 Black has an excellent game: if 16 ♗e2, then 16...f5! is strong.

15...♕d6! 16 ♕d2 ♘e6 17 ♗xe6 (White is now forced to give up bishop for knight) **17...♕xe6**



18 ♔e3?!

'This manoeuvre has its logic: ♘e5 is threatened. Despite everything, White fights for the initiative!' (Makarichev). Even so, this is a mistake which aggravates White's difficulties. Of course, Polugayevsky realised that it was bad to move his king into the centre, but he wanted to eliminate the pin. Black's unexpected novelty had obviously upset his mental equilibrium (it is no secret that he usually did not react in the best way in such situations).

18 ♕d3 came into consideration, with the idea of developing the h1-rook and playing ♔f1. In this case the sharp 18...f5 19 e5 a5 (Sveshnikov) is refuted by the computer stroke 20 ♕b3! ♕xb3 21 axb3 with a saving pin on the a-file. And although after 18...♖d8 or 18...♘d7 Black would have retained an appreciable advantage, in view of the insecurity of the white king and the eccentric position of the knight at b4, White's position would still have been defensible.

18...f5!

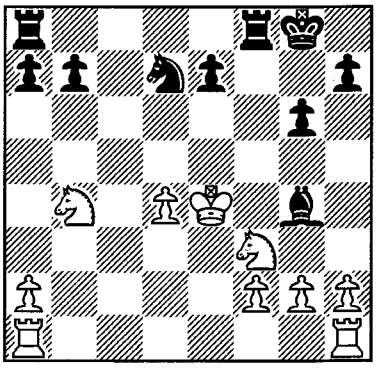
The most energetic, although Black also has a rather dangerous initiative after 18...♘d7 19 ♘g5 (Makarichev; 19 ♘d5 ♗xf3 and 20...f5!) 19...♕d6!? 20 f3 (20 h3 ♘b6!) 20...f6 21 ♘xh7 ♔xh7 22 fxg4 ♘b6.

19 ♕d3

'After 19 ♘e5? Black would have gained a decisive attack by 19...♘d7 20 f3 ♘xe5 21 dxe5 fxe4 22 fxg4 ♖ad8 23 ♕b2 ♕b6+ *(followed by 24 ♔xe4 ♖f2 25 ♕b3+ ♔g7 – G.K.).* White's position is also unenviable after 19 e5? f4+ 20 ♔e2 ♘c6.' (Makarichev). 20...♗xf3+ is even better: 21 ♔xf3 a5 22 ♘c2 ♕d5+ or 21 gxf3 ♕c4+ 22 ♔e1 a5 23 ♘c2 ♘c6 and wins.

19...fxe4! 20 ♕xe4 ♕xe4+ 21 ♔xe4 ♘d7

'Play has gone into an ending that is difficult for White. In addition Polugayevsky had only 10 minutes left for 19 moves.' (Makarichev)



22 ♖hc1?!

White had already lost heart. The only way of retaining chances of saving the game was by the activation of the ill-starred knight – 22

♘d5, in order after 22...♗xf3+ 23 gxf3 ♘f6+ 24 ♘xf6+ ♖xf6 25 ♖hc1 ♖e6+ 26 ♔f4 ♖d8 27 ♖c7 ♖xd4+ 28 ♔g3 ♖b4 to invade the 7th rank with the rooks: 29 ♖d1! ♔f7 30 ♖dd7 ♖e2 31 a3 ♖b1 32 ♔g2 ♖bb2 33 ♔g3 etc. However, 22...e6! would have left Black with an obvious advantage, after both 23 ♘c7 ♖ac8 24 ♖a(h)c1 ♖f5! or 23 ♘f4(c3) ♗xf3+ 24 gxf3 ♖f5!, and 23 ♘e3 ♘f6+, since 24 ♔d3 ♗xf3 25 gxf3 ♘d5!, 24 ♔f4 ♗xf3 25 gxf3 ♖ad8 and 24 ♔e5 ♖ad8 etc. are all insufficient.

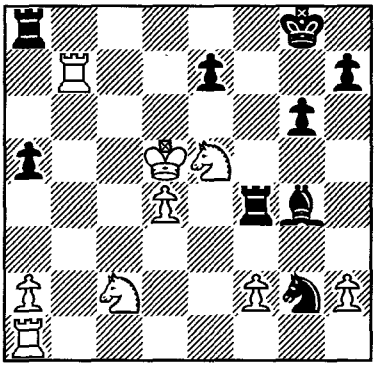
22...♖f5!

'A very unpleasant move, preparing both the manoeuvre ...♘d7-f6-d5, and the doubling of rooks on the f-file.' (Makarichev). Despite the absence of the queens, the position has not lost its middlegame features: there are still plenty of pieces on the board, and Black's chances of creating threats to the white king are far from exhausted, to say nothing about an attack on the weak white pawns.

23 ♖c7?!

'The rook moves into a fork. The lesser evil was probably 23 ♘d3, retaining some practical chances.' (Makarichev). Whereas 23 ♘d5 would have encountered the strong reply 23...♘f6+! 24 ♘xf6+ exf6 25 ♖e1 (25 d5 ♖e8+ 26 ♔d4 ♖d8) 25...♗xf3+ 26 gxf3 ♖e8+ 27 ♔d3 ♖xe1 28 ♖xe1 ♖xf3+ 29 ♔c4 ♖xf2.

23...♘f6+ 24 ♔d3 (24 ♔e3 a5 25 ♘d3 ♗xf3 26 gxf3 ♘d5+ etc.) **24...a5 25 ♘c2 ♘d5 26 ♖xb7 ♘f4+ 27 ♔e4 ♘xg2 28 ♘e5 ♖f4+ 29 ♔d5**



29...♗f5! 30 ♖c7

'There is no defence against the threats of ...♗e4 or ...♗xc2, since 30 ♖b2 ♖xf2 31 ♖c1 ♖c8 and ...♘f4+ would have led to mate. White loses a piece.' (Makarichev)

30...♖d8+ 31 ♔c5 ♗xc2 32 ♘c6 ♖e8 33 ♘xe7+ ♔f8 34 ♘c6 ♖f5+ 35 ♘e5 ♘f4 36 ♖xh7 ♔g8 37 ♖d7 ♘d3+ 38 ♔b6 ♘xe5 39 dxe5 ♖exe5 40 ♖c1 ♖f6+ 41 ♔a7 ♖xf2 0-1

White resigned, and Korchnoi won the match.

But, to all appearances, the peak of Korchnoi's form had already passed, and a certain crisis was apparent. It is probable that his age was beginning to tell – after all one's energy reserve is not unlimited – as well as his lack of appearances in the strongest tournaments: to maintain the required form one must constantly play with players of equal class! Whereas Korchnoi's first match with Polugayevsky had indicated an unprecedented creative surge (undoubtedly associated with moving to the West: he had become a free man), the second match proclaimed that the end of the golden period of his career was approaching.

Things were also very difficult for Korchnoi in the final Candidates match with the outstanding German grandmaster Robert Hübner (Merano, winter 1980/81), one of the rare world-class players in history who has been successful not only in chess – he is a prominent philologist, and the author of numerous scientific works (to say nothing of his chess articles and commentaries).

Many players of the older generation remember the remarkable finishing spurt of the young Hübner at the Interzonal tournament in Mallorca (1970), his confident, mature play in the match with Petrosian (1971) and his unexpected resignation of the match after six draws and a loss from a good position in the 7th; another tragic defeat at the hands of Petrosian came at the finish of the Interzonal tourna-

ment in Biel (1976), which denied him a place in the Candidates matches. But in the next cycle Dr Hübner attained the peak of his career: he shared 1st-3rd places with Petrosian and Portisch in the Interzonal tournament (Rio de Janeiro 1979), then won matches against Adorjan and Portisch, and began splendidly in the final encounter with Viktor the Terrible...

Back in 1973 they had met in a training match of eight games, won by Korchnoi not without difficulty (4½-3½). But now Hübner was 32 years old, at the height of his creative powers, playing confidently and tenaciously – and after six games he was leading: +2–1=3. In the 7th game – a French with 3 ♘d2 – he obtained clearly the better endgame with a pair of powerful bishops. Korchnoi defended resourcefully, and on the resumption, in a sharp time scramble, he succeeded in equalising. A draw was now inevitable, but on the 63rd move Hübner suddenly missed a knight check and lost a rook!

'Sensing blood', he won the 8th game in a forceful and technical manner, and took the lead for the first time in the match: 4½-3½. This was the psychological turning point. The next game was adjourned in a roughly level ending, and then came the 10th game, which was also adjourned, but with an obvious advantage for Korchnoi.

The next day the media agencies announced to the world the sensational news that Hübner had refused to resume the game and had resigned the match! Yet the match was the best of 16 games, and the probable 6-4 score was by no means catastrophic. But after his tragic blunder of a rook, Hübner had apparently lost faith in himself... At any event, despite all the difficulties, Korchnoi won his second successive Candidates cycle – previously this had been achieved only by Smyslov and Spassky. But to become a finalist also in two other cycles (1968 and 1974) – this had not been achieved by anyone!

It was also there in Merano that the next world championship match Karpov-Korchnoi (October-November 1981) took place. It should have started earlier, but the new FIDE President Fridrik Olafsson deferred the match for a month, 'wishing to secure equal conditions for both contestants', i.e. finally to gain permission for the Korchnoi family to leave the USSR. Nothing came of this, but a year later, in the election of the FIDE President at the Congress in Lucerne, the Soviet bloc countries refused to support Olafsson, and gave their preference to Campomanes...

The Soviet authorities did everything possible to help Karpov fulfil the parting words which resounded from the lips of Brezhnev himself: 'You've seized the crown, now hang on to it!' This match was accompanied by an unprecedented patriotic campaign. Karpov was given the best trainers and all the help that could be provided by the state apparatus. The atmosphere of suspicion surrounding the battle in Merano can be judged from the fact that a Soviet delegation – including Karpov – went there a few weeks before the start of the match, to check the drinking water, climatic conditions, and the level of noise and radiation (this was revealed to the press by the chairman of the organising committee).

The public was staggered by the ten enormous containers brought to the match by the Karpov team. Pictures of these appeared in the Italian newspapers under garish headlines, such as 'The Russians' secret weapon?' But Baturinsky explained that the experience of the more than three months spent in Baguio had been taken into account: 'Who knows how long the present match will last? There is much that has to be provided. Card indexes, chess books, theoretical material, the results of the many days of preparatory work... This part of the load can be considered a secret weapon. Also needed were medication, foodstuffs, sports equipment. And so it accumulated, a whole ton of goods.'

The match turned out to be not so tough as the one in Baguio. Although Korchnoi had

been maintaining his vigour by playing in non-elite tournaments throughout the year, he no longer had the energy to oppose his thoroughly armed young opponent. They again played to six wins, and the start proved disheartening for the challenger – three defeats in four games! The cause of this was not even Karpov's super preparation in the opening, but the openly poor play of Korchnoi, who not so much allowed himself to be outplayed, but rather outplayed himself. As it transpired, right from the start his blood pressure jumped and his eyes began to hurt and to water – this had never happened to him before.

Years later Viktor Lvovich recalled: 'In Merano Karpov "with his comrades" (there were 43 such comrades, and as many as 70 at the end of the match) forced me to endure a nightmare.' He was convinced that the latest achievements of Soviet intelligence had been used against him. 'There is no doubt that Karpov's people were sitting in the front row and using instruments to study my condition – pulse and so on. In addition, I was irradiated – either in the auditorium, or at the country house where I was staying.' His press attaché Emmanuel Sztein also though that 'in Merano there was something sinister', and he described in an interview how he had come across three strangers in his hotel room, rummaging through his papers, and how one of them squirted something in his eyes, after which he lost consciousness and later had great problems with his blood pressure and his sight...

Yes, police control and the activity of special intelligence services were a characteristic feature of several world championship encounters, beginning with the Spassky-Fischer match. However, I don't know anything about secret instruments and the irradiating of one of the contestants. Therefore I can only confirm Korchnoi's words, that during such matches all sorts of devilry occurs. And not least because a player's nervous system experiences incomparable stress.

All the same, Korchnoi found in himself the strength to continue the battle, although at that moment it was not clear how he could change the unfortunate course of the match. In the 5th game he unsuccessfully tried for more than thirty moves to win a rook endgame with four pawns against three on one flank. At that time I was playing in Tilburg, and I remember commenting in surprise: 'Why waste so much time? It's a dead draw!' But Petrosian and Spassky did not agree, and they explained to me the point of Korchnoi's tactics: on the day after such an adjournment session it is very difficult to play for a win with White...

And the 6th game reminded the world of the former Korchnoi! Whereas in the 2nd game after 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 he had replied with the modest 2...♘c6 3 ♗b5 ♘f6, and in the 4th he had altogether diverged with 2...♘f6, now, when there was nothing to lose, he decided to renew the theoretical duel, begun in Baguio, in his favourite Open Variation of the Spanish. It can be considered that it was with this game that the real match began – with a tense, uncompromising struggle and critical opening duels.

Game 35

A.Karpov-V.Korchnoi

World Championship Match,
Merano 1981, 6th game
Ruy Lopez C82

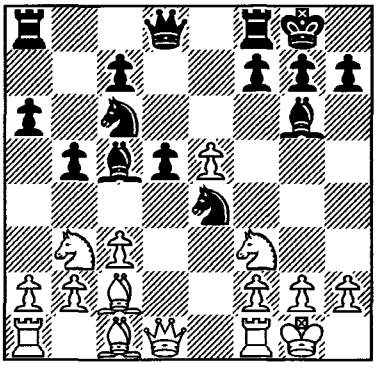
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3

This game had such a strong influence on the development of opening theory, that after it players with White, beginning with Karpov, began increasingly often to prefer 9 ♘bd2 (*Game Nos.85 and 86*).

9...♗c5 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♗c2 ♗f5 12 ♘b3 ♗g6!

Instead of 12...♗g4 (*Game No.75*), Korchnoi adopted a variation which had been

studied back in 1955 by Geller and his second Bondarevsky in preparations for the match with Smyslov for the title of USSR Champion. Subsequently it was played by Savon, Yusupov and Geller himself.



13 ♘fd4

If 13 a4, then 13...♗b6 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 (Tukmakov-Savon, 37th USSR Championship, Moscow 1969), or 14 ♘bd4 ♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 ♕d7! 16 ♗e3 ♘c5 17 a5 ♗a7 18 f4 ♗xc2 19 ♘xc2 f6 20 exf6 ♖xf6 (Van der Wiel-Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1983), in each case with equality.

13...♗xd4 14 cxd4

Little is promised by 14 ♘xd4 ♕d7!, when after 15 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 16 ♗e3 ♖fe8 both 17 f4? ♘xc3! (Korchnoi-Karl, Swiss Championship 1982) and 17 f3? ♘xc3! (Speelman-Timman, 6th matchgame, London 1989) are bad for White. Or 15 f4 ♘xd4 16 cxd4 f6 17 ♗e3, and now not 17...fxe5?! (Leko-Korchnoi, Leon 1994) on account of 18 dxe5, but 17...♖ad8 with equality (Klovans-Dorfman, Moscow 1981).

14...a5 15 ♗e3 (15 f3 a4! or 15 ♗d3 ♕b8 16 ♗f4 ♕b6! is less good for White) **15...a4!**

Previously this position was judged to favour White in view of 15...♘b4?! 16 ♗b1 a4 17 ♘d2! a3 18 ♕c1! with the threat of bxa3 (Karpov-Savon, Moscow 1971).

16 ♘c1

After 16 ♘d2 a3 it is now bad to play 17 ♕c1? axb2, when the d4-pawn is lost. The correct course is 17 ♖b1 axb2 18 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 19 ♖xb2 ♕d7 (A.Ivanov-Yusupov, Frunze 1979) 20 ♗d3! ♗xd3 21 ♕xd3 with pressure on the b-pawn and along the c-file. Here Korchnoi held his ground with Black against Hübner (Chicago 1982; Lucerne Olympiad 1982) and Lobron (Paris 1984), but Karpov with White defeated Yusupov (50th USSR Championship, Moscow 1983).

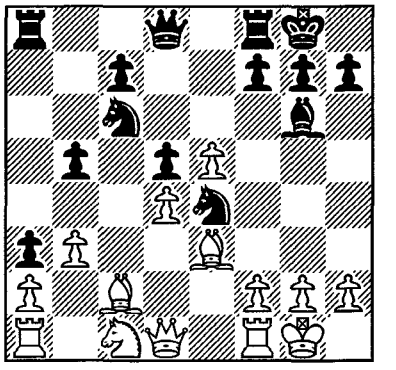
However, from the late 1980s they began answering 16 ♘d2 with 16...f6!, for example: 17 ♖c1 fxe5 18 ♘xe4 dxe4 19 d5 ♘e7 20 ♗c5 ♖f7 with equality (Ivanchuk-Grischuk, Rethymnon 2003).

16...a3

A useful inclusion – both for the middlegame, and for the endgame, where the weakness of the a2-pawn is especially sensitive. The immediate 16...f6 leads after 17 f3 (17 ♘d3!?) 17...fxe5! 18 fxe4 (18 dxe5? d4! Voitkevich–Sideif-Zade, USSR 1981) 18...♖xf1+ 19 ♕xf1 to very sharp play.

17 b3

If 17 ♖b1, then 17...f6 gains in strength: 18 f3 fxe5! 19 fxe4 ♖xf1+ 20 ♕xf1 exd4 (Unzicker-Korchnoi, Beersheva 1984), while the attempt 17 bxa3 ♖xa3 18 ♗b3 ♘c3 19 ♕d2 b4 20 ♘d3 is parried by 20...♗xd3 21 ♕xd3 ♕a8! with equality (Nunn-Marin, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988).



17...f6!

Korchnoi did not arrive empty-handed for this encounter. The games Romanishin-

Yusupov and Tseshkovsky-Geller (48th USSR Championship, Vilnius 1980/81) went 17...♘b4 18 ♗b1 c5, and in the second of these White gained an obvious advantage after 19 dxc5! ♘c6 20 ♘e2 ♕e8 21 f4. On this occasion Black attacks the centre from the other side, without hurrying to occupy the b4-square with his knight.

18 exf6

'Perhaps this move involves some oversight: now Black achieves a good game in the centre and on the kingside.' (Geller). 18 f3 fxe5! 19 fxe4 (19 dxe5? d4!) 19...♖xf1+ 20 ♕xf1 exd4 etc. is also unfavourable for White.

But not long before the match, the game Aseev-Dorfman (Saratov 1981) went 18 ♘d3!? fxe5 19 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 20 ♗xe4 dxe4 21 dxe5 ♖e8 22 ♖c1 ♖xe5 23 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 24 ♖xc7 ♖ed5 with a slightly inferior ending for Black. An alternative defence is 21...♕xd1 22 ♖fxd1 ♖fd8 23 h3 (23 ♖dc1!? is stronger – Wedberg) 23...♗f7 24 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 25 ♖c1 ♖c8 with equality (Ivanchuk-Timman, Novgorod 1995).

18...♕xf6 19 ♘e2 ♘b4! (19...♕e7 20 ♖c1 ♘b4 21 ♗b1 ♖ae8 22 ♘c3 ♘xc3 23 ♖xc3 ♗xb1 24 ♕xb1 c6 is also not bad, Speelman-Timman, 4th matchgame, London 1989) **20 ♗b1 ♕e7**

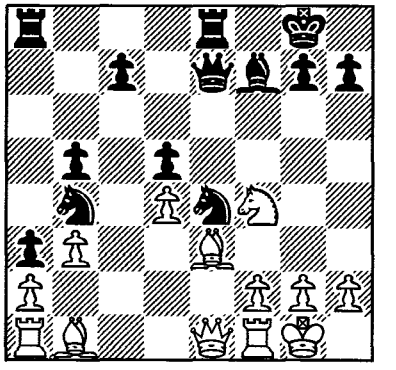
A solid prophylactic move: Black inhibits f2-f3 and defends the knight at b4. 20...c5?! is premature in view of 21 f3 ♘g5 (Nunn; 21...♘d6 22 ♗xg6 and dxc5) 22 ♕d2! ♘e6 23 ♗xg6 ♕xg6 24 dxc5.

Geller thought that 20...♖ae8 (Liberzon-Stean, Beersheva 1982) 21 ♕c1 c5 was 'far more active', and if 22 ♕xa3?, then 22...♘d2! However, after 22 f3! White's chances are at least equal: 22...♘d6 23 ♗g5 ♕f7 24 ♕xc5 and ♕xb4, or 22...♕e7 23 ♖e1 ♘f6 24 ♘f4 ♗xb1 25 ♖xb1 etc.

21 ♕e1

Soon afterwards Razuvaev recommended 21 ♖e1!? with the idea of f2-f3, but in the game Short-Timman (Erevan Olympiad 1996) this was met by 21...♘xf2! 22 ♗xf2 ♗xb1 23 ♖xb1 ♖xf2! 24 ♔xf2 ♖f8+ 25 ♘f4!? (avoiding the draw after 25 ♔g1 ♕e3+ 26 ♔h1 ♘d3 27 ♖f1 ♖xf1+ 28 ♕xf1 ♘f2+ 29 ♔g1 ♘h3+) 25...♖xf4+ 26 ♔g1 ♖e4 27 ♕d2 ♘d3! 28 ♖f1 ♖xd4 29 ♖f3 ♘f4! 30 ♕f2 g5 31 ♖e3 ♖e4, and largely thanks to the strong a3-pawn Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange.

21...♖fe8 (21...♖ae8!? Geller) **22 ♘f4** (White has to play carefully: 22 f3? ♘f6 23 ♗d2 ♘d3, and 22 ♕c1? ♘xf2! 23 ♔xf2 ♗xb1 with the threat of ...♘d3+ are both bad for him) **22...♗f7**



23 ♕c1?!

Hübner attaches a question mark to this 'inexplicable' move and recommends 23 f3. Indeed, after 23...♘c3 24 ♗d2! (24 ♕xc3 is weaker: 24...♕xe3+ 25 ♕xe3 ♖xe3 26 ♔f2 ♖ae8) 24...♕f6 25 ♕f2 ♘c6 (25...♘xb1 26 ♗xb4) 26 ♗xc3 ♕xf4 27 ♗d3 the chances are roughly equal.

Geller, Nunn and Suetin suggested the 'sound' 23 ♘d3 (getting rid of the unpleasant knight at b4), although, in my view, after 23...♘c6! Black's chances are somewhat better. From the standpoint of playing to maintain the balance, 23 ♗xe4 dxe4 24 ♕e2 and ♖c1 was possible.

23 ♕c1 is a more ambitious move: White is threatening after ♖e1 and f3-f3 to take control of the c5-square and to exert pressure on the c-file. But Black's reply disrupts these plans. After the game Karpov admitted that in his

preparations and during the game itself he had underestimated the dangers concealed in White's position.

23...c5!

A radical solution to the problem! Black sacrifices a pawn, but he gets rid of his weakness at c7, opens the c-file and obtains a passed d-pawn – how many pluses for a slight material deficit!

24 dxc5

Otherwise ...c5-c4. But if 24 ♗xe4?! ♕xe4 25 ♕xc5, then 25...♘c2 with strong counterplay – Tal and Geller gave the variation 26 ♖ac1 ♖ac8! 27 ♕xb5 ♘xe3 28 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 29 fxe3 ♕xe3+ 30 ♔h1 ♖c1. White also has a difficult endgame after 28...♘xf1!? 29 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 30 ♕xd5+ ♕xd5 31 ♘xd5 ♘d2, again because of the 'Achilles' heel' at a2.

24...♕f6

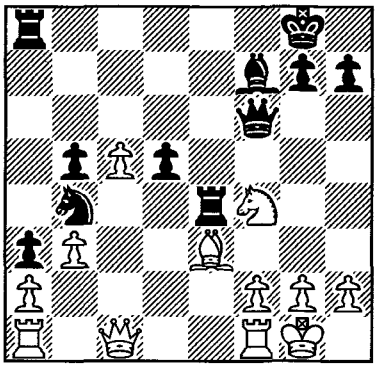
'Now there is a dispute for the d4-square.' (Hübner). At the same time, it is not so easy for White to coordinate the actions of his pieces.

25 ♗xe4

After the clever 25 ♕d1!? with the idea of 25...♕xa1? 26 ♗d4 ♕xb1 27 ♕xb1 ♘d2 28 ♕f5 ♘xf1 29 ♕g5 ♗g6 30 ♘xg6 and wins (Nunn), or 25...♘c3?! 26 ♗d4! ♘xd1 27 ♗xf6 gxf6 28 ♖xd1, the simple 25...♖ad8! could have followed, with sufficient counterplay.

25...♖xe4

Threatening ...♖xf4 and ...♘d3, as well as ...d5-d4.



26 ♘e2?!

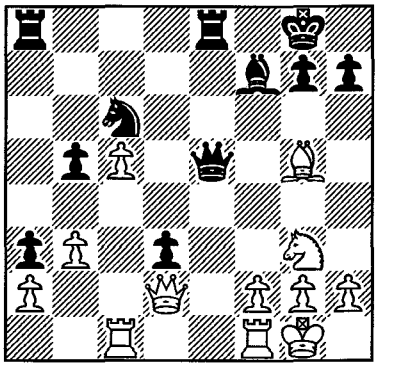
'According to Tal, initially the world champion had been planning 26 ♕d2, in order to pin down the d5-pawn by the attack on the knight at b4, but then he did not like 26...♕b2. Although, after 27 ♖fd1 Black has nothing significant, and merely compensation for the pawn.' (Geller)

However, after 27...♖ae8! this compensation is more than sufficient: 28 f3 ♖xe3 29 ♕xb4 g5 30 ♘h3 ♖e2 31 ♕g4 h6 or 28 ♕xb2 axb2 29 ♖ab1 g5 30 ♘e2 ♗h5 31 ♖xb2 ♗xe2 32 ♖xe2 d4 is unfavourable for White, while if 28 g3, then 28...♘c6! 29 ♕xb2 (if 29 ♘e2 both 29...b4 and 29...♘e5 are good) 29...axb2 30 ♖ab1 d4 31 ♗d2 g5 32 f3 ♖4e7 33 ♘h3 ♘e5 (or 33...h6 34 ♖xb2 ♗d5) 34 ♘xg5 ♗d5 etc. In all these variations White is obliged to defend against the opponent's pressure.

26...d4 27 ♘g3 ♖ee8 28 ♕d2 ♘c6 (28...dxe3? 29 fxe3 ♕h4 30 ♖f4, regaining the piece) **29 ♗g5 ♕e5 30 ♖ac1**

White does not want to give up his only trump – his extra c5-pawn. Geller gave the alternative 30 ♖fe1 ♕xc5 31 ♘e4, 'returning the pawn and activating his forces', but after 31...♕d5 32 f3 ♗g6 the advantage is with Black.

30...d3

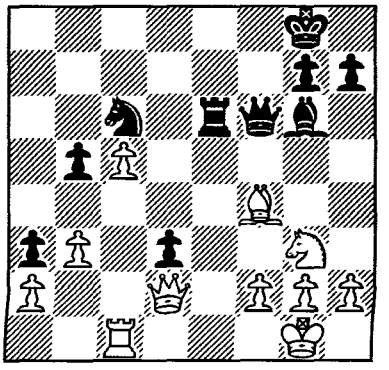


'Maintaining the initiative: now ...♕b2 and ...♘d4 are possible threats.' (Suetin). In addition, Black is not averse to seizing control of the e-file.

31 ♖fd1

31 ♖fe1 ♕b2 (31...♕d5 32 ♗f4) 32 ♘f5 would appear to be better, but after 32...♖xe1+ 33 ♖xe1 ♖e8 34 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 35 f3 ♗g6 36 ♘d6 ♘d4! the weakness of White's queenside would have caused him a mass of problems.

31...♗g6 32 ♗e3 ♖e6 (with the intention of ...♖ae8) **33 ♗f4 ♕f6** (33...♕b2 34 h4!?) **34 ♖e1 ♖ae8 35 ♖xe6 ♖xe6**



36 ♖b1?

In a difficult position White prevents the invasion of the queen at b2. 'If 36 ♖d1, then 36...♘d4 with the idea of ...♘e(c)2 is strong.' (Geller). Or 36...h5!? – this is also good after 36 ♗e3.

Probably the last chance was 36 ♖e1, in order after 36...♖xe1+?! 37 ♕xe1 ♕xf4 38 ♕e6+ ♔f8 39 ♕xc6 to exploit the open position of the black king, for example: 39...♕d4 40 ♕c8+ ♔e7 41 ♕b7+! ♔f6 42 ♕c6+, and nothing is given by 42...♔g5 in view of 43 ♕f3! d2?! 44 h4+! ♔xh4 45 ♘f5+ ♗xf5 46 ♕xf5 d1♕+ 47 ♔h2 (threatening 48 g3 mate) 47...♕xf2 48 ♕xf2+ ♔g5 49 ♕g3+ with the better queen endgame for White.

36...h5!

Since Karpov has defended on the queenside, Korchnoi begins an attack on the kingside, threatening with gain of tempo to play ...h5-h4-h3 and seriously weaken the light squares in the opponent's position – in particular f3. 36...♘d4!? was also not bad.

37 h3

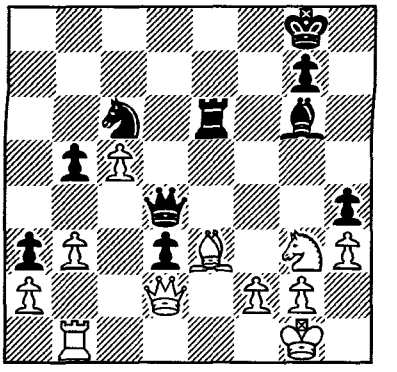
'An essential move.' (Geller). In the event of 37 ♗g5 ♕d4 38 ♗e3 ♕e5 39 b4 h4 40 ♘f1 h3 White's position is indeed critical, but now too it is unenviable.

37...h4

Korchnoi's customary time-trouble begins to tell. After 37...♘d4! 38 ♗e3 (38 ♗g5 ♘e2+! 39 ♘xe2 ♖xe2 and wins) 38...h4! (this is stronger than Hübner's recommendation 38...♘c2) 39 ♘f1 ♘e2+ 40 ♔h1 ♗e4! 41 ♘h2 ♕e5 Black would have gained a decisive attack.

38 ♗g5 ♕d4 39 ♗e3

Karpov defends desperately, trying to confuse his opponent and somehow consolidate his position. And he almost succeeds in this!



39...♕d5?

A large advantage would have been retained by 39...♕e5! 40 ♘f1 ♕d5 (Nunn), for example: 41 f3 ♘d4!, or 41 ♖e1 ♗e4, and if 42 f3, then 42...♗xf3! 43 gxf3 ♘e5 44 ♘h2 ♖g6+ 45 ♔f2 ♖g3 46 ♕d1 ♖xh3 47 ♖h1 g5 and White has no defence.

40 ♘f1?

An error in reply. 'In his opponent's time-trouble White purely mechanically makes a move that was planned long ago.' (Geller). Whereas 40 ♘e2!, threatening the fork ♘f4, would have saved him from a rout and even, in the opinion of many commentators, given him winning chances. Although, in my opinion, after 40...♕f5! 41 ♘f4 ♖e8 42 ♖d1 ♖d8 Black would have retained reasonable compensation for the pawn: 43 ♘xg6 ♕xg6 44 ♕c1 (44 ♗f4 ♖d5) 44...♕h5 etc.

40...♗e4 (Black succeeds in making his last move before the time control, which gives him an irresistible attack) **41 ♗f4**

It turns out that after 41 f3 Black wins by 41...♗xf3! 42 gxf3 ♘e5 43 ♔h1 ♖g6 or 43 ♘h2 ♘xf3+ 44 ♘xf3 ♕xf3 (Nunn) 45 ♕xd3 ♕g3+ 46 ♔f1 ♖xe3 47 ♕d5+ ♔f8!

41...♗xg2 0-1

Sealed. White resigned in view of 42 ♘e3 ♕f3 43 ♘xg2 (43 ♕xd3 ♗xh3) 43...♖e2.

The score was now 3-1 and the match situation became somewhat more complicated: Karpov temporarily 'lost' the white pieces. In the 8th and 10th games he played 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗c4, and in the 12th – 1 c4, but all of them, as well as the 7th and 11th, ended in draws. During those days, on the directive of the Sports Committee, a group of grandmasters was urgently assembled at the Olympic training base in Novogorsk on the outskirts of Moscow, day and night analysing topical opening variations, including the Open Variation of the Spanish.

In the 9th game the champion employed a strong and unexpected novelty in the Queen's Gambit and accurately took advantage of his opponent's uncertain play (*Game No.84*). The score became 4-1 and, of course, few believed that a repetition of Baguio was possible: Karpov only needed to win two more games, and he still had ample strength (true, miracles sometimes occur: in his first match with me, he was even leading 4-0 after nine games!).

However, in the 13th game a warning signal sounded for the entire enormous Soviet team: Korchnoi scored his second win in the match in very good style.

Game 36

V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov

World Championship Match, Merano 1981, 13th game

Queen's Gambit D31

1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 ♗e7 4 cxd5

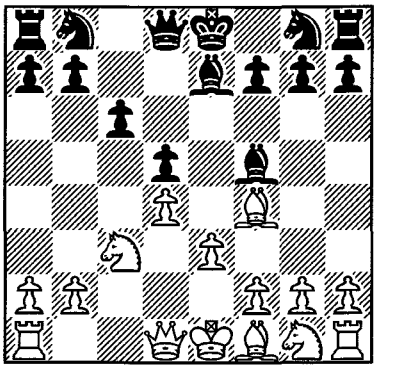
Before this in the match only 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 had occurred, and in the odd-numbered games from the 1st to the 9th Korchnoi did not obtain any real advantage after 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗h4 0-0, while in the 11th he did not achieve anything in a variation which had caused Karpov many unpleasant moments in Baguio – 5 ♗f4 0-0 6 e3 c5 (cf. *Game No.30*).

4...exd5 5 ♗f4 c6

In the game Timman-Karpov (Bugojno 1978) after 5...♘f6 6 e3 0-0 7 ♕c2 c6 8 ♗d3 ♖e8 9 ♘f3 ♘bd7 10 0-0-0 ♘f8 11 h3, having obtained a favourable version of the Carlsbad structure, White was the first to begin an attack on the king.

6 e3 ♗f5

6...♗d6 is more solid, but also more passive: 7 ♗xd6 (7 ♗g3 is scarcely any stronger, Botvinnik-Kurajica, Belgrade 1969) 7...♕xd6 8 ♗d3 with a minimal plus for White (Gligoric-Portisch, Palma de Mallorca 1967).



7 g4!?

Following in the footsteps of Botvinnik, who successfully played this in his match with Petrosian (1963). It is interesting that in the resulting complicated position Korchnoi also succeeded in completely outplaying his formidable opponent.

7...♗e6 (7...♗g6 8 h4!) **8 h3**

The sharper continuation 8 h4 ♘d7 (8...♗xh4?! 9 ♕b3!) 9 h5 ♕b6 (Botvinnik-Spassky, Leiden 1970) has already been described in Volume 2 (*Game No.71*), while

9...♘h6!? (Kasparov-Karpov, 21st matchgame, Moscow 1985) will be analysed in detail in Volume 7.

8...♘f6

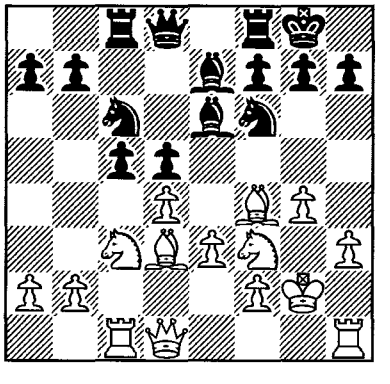
It is not clear what can be bad about the quiet development of the knight, but at the same time Black has often experienced difficulties and many games have ended sadly for him. 8...♗d6 9 ♘ge2 ♘e7 10 ♕b3 is also considered to favour White (Korchnoi-Spassky, 2nd matchgame, Kiev 1968). Therefore nowadays they prefer to initiate immediate counterplay on the kingside: 8...♘d7 9 ♗d3 g5! 10 ♗g3 h5 11 f3 (11 gxh5 ♘gf6) 11...♕b6 12 ♖b1 c5 13 ♔f1 hxg4 14 fxg4 ♘h6 15 ♔g2 f5 16 ♕f3 fxg4 17 hxg4 ♘f6 with equality (Rustemov-Vallejo, Dos Hermanas 2003), or 11...♘gf6 12 ♖h2 ♘b6 and ...♗d6 with good play for Black (Krush-Bruzon, Buenos Aires 2003).

9 ♗d3 c5 10 ♘f3 0-0 11 ♔f1! (one of those rare instances when artificial castling is more appropriate) **11...♘c6 12 ♔g2 ♖c8**

Black does not fully equalise with 12...cxd4 13 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 (or 13...♗d6 14 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 15 ♘ce2 ♖fe8 16 ♖c1 ♗d7 17 ♗b1! Geller-Spassky, Moscow 1967) 14 exd4, as in the 14th game of the Botvinnik-Petrosian match (*Volume 2, Game No.71*).

13 ♖c1

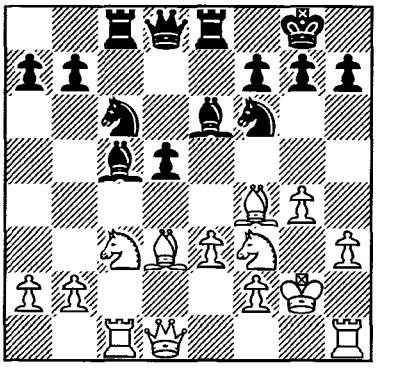
13 dxc5 ♗xc5 (Bronstein-Kuijpers, Amsterdam 1968) is somewhat premature, since Black acquires the threat of ...d5-d4.



13...♖e8?

It is hard to believe that such a natural move can be bad. Korchnoi, Keene and many other commentators recommended 13...a6. Indeed, in this case 14 dxc5 is no longer effective: 14...♗xc5 15 ♘b5 ♘b4! or 15 a3 d4 with equality. Karpov decided to maintain the tension, setting Korchnoi a comparatively new problem, but the latter copes with it impeccably.

14 dxc5! ♗xc5



15 ♘b5

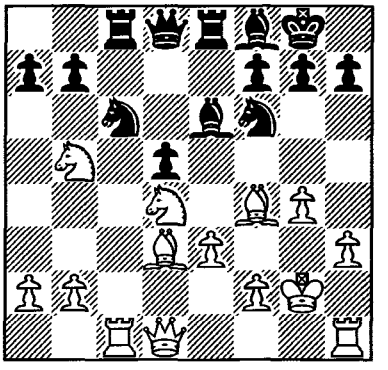
White occupies the d4-square with gain of tempo and gains an enduring advantage thanks to his control of the centre, spatial superiority and greater activity of his pieces – in particular his bishops, which control the key diagonals.

It would appear that such a position with an 'isolani' should suit Black, since the white king is too exposed. But here the g4-pawn is not so much a weakness, as an outpost, restricting the mobility of the enemy pieces and creating the threat of g4-g5. In addition, White also has dangerous threats on the queenside, where his pieces are far better placed for action. And, strangely enough, Black is obliged to solve difficult and unpleasant problems: he has not even a hint of real counterplay.

15...♗f8 (15...♕b6? 16 ♗c7 and wins, while if 15...♕e7, then 16 ♘g5 is good) **16 ♘fd4!**

'Karpov had only been expecting 16 ♘bd4 and now, uncharacteristically, he sank into

thought for 35 minutes.' (Keene). Now Black must all the time reckon with the exchange ♘xe6, which will rid him of his 'isolani', but will give him new weaknesses and strengthen the threat of g4-g5 followed by ♕h5 and a terribly strong attack on the king.



16...♘xd4

It is a mistake to play 16...♕d7? 17 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 18 ♗f5 or 17...fxe6 18 g5. 'According to the champion, he rejected the previously intended 16...♕b6 on account of 17 ♕b3 ♘a5 18 ♕a4 ♗d7 19 ♗f5 with the advantageous exchange of bishops.' (Geller). However, after 19...♗xf5 20 ♘xf5 ♖c4 21 ♖xc4 ♘xc4 22 b3 ♘b2 23 ♕d4 ♕xb5 24 ♕xb2 these advantages are slight. Tal and Geller parried 17 ♕b3 with 17...♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 (18 exd4 ♖c4!) 18...♕xb3, thinking that after 19 ♘xb3 White has only a minimal advantage.

However, after 16...♕b6 Korchnoi was in fact planning 17 ♘xe6!, which also in my view was far more promising: 17...♖xe6 18 ♘d4 ♖ee8 19 ♕b3! and the white bishops dominate – Black faces a very difficult endgame, or 17...fxe6 18 g5 ♘d7 (if 18...♘e4, then 19 ♘c3! ♘xc3? 20 ♗xh7+ is strong, or 19...♖cd8 20 ♕g4) 19 ♕h5 g6 20 ♗xg6 hxg6 21 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 (21...♗g7?! 22 ♘d6! etc.) 22 ♘c7 ♖e7 23 ♘xe6 ♕b4 (23...♕xb2 is weaker: 24 ♗d6! ♖h7 25 ♖c2) 24 ♘d4 (Korchnoi's move; 24 ♖hd1!?) with a powerful attack.

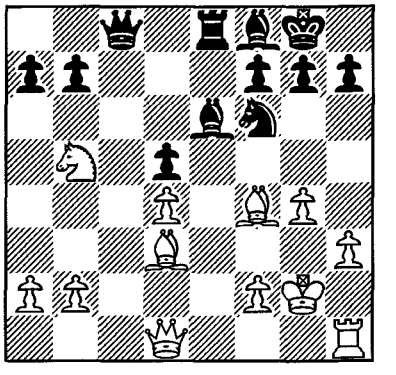
16...♕a5 is no better, for example: 17 a3 ♘xd4 18 ♘xd4 ♖xc1 19 ♕xc1 ♖c8 20 ♕b1 ♗d7 21 ♖c1, and Black is condemned to passive defence, or again the energetic 17 ♘xe6!? fxe6 18 g5 ♘d7?! (after 18...♘e4 both 19 ♗xe4 dxe4 20 ♕b3 and 19 ♘c3 are good) 19 ♕h5! g6 20 ♗xg6 hxg6 21 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 22 ♘d6! (if 22 ♘c7 ♖e7 23 ♘xe6, then 23...♖ce8!) 22...♗xd6 23 ♗xd6 d4 (23...♕d8 24 ♖hd1 or 23...♕a4 24 b4 is no better for Black) 24 ♕h6+ ♔g8 25 g6 ♕d5+ 26 f3 ♘f6 27 ♖c5! ♕xa2 (27...♕xd6 28 ♖h5) 28 ♖h5 ♕xb2+ 29 ♔g3 ♘xh5+ 30 ♕xh5 ♖c7! 31 ♗xc7 ♖e7 32 ♗d6 ♖g7 33 ♗f8!! and wins.

17 ♖xc8 ♕xc8

If 17...♗xc8 again 18 exd4 is good, and then 18...♕a5 19 a3 with the ideas of ♗c7 and b2-b4 (Korchnoi), 18...♕b6 19 ♕b3, 18...♘e4 19 ♕c2, or 18...a6 19 ♘c7 ♖e7 20 ♕c2 with unpleasant pressure which is hard to neutralise: 20...♖d7?! 21 ♖c1 ♗d6 22 ♘e6 fxe6 23 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 24 ♕xc8 (Korchnoi), or 20...h5 21 f3. In all these variations the difference in the activity of the white and black pieces is obvious.

18 exd4!

Perhaps Karpov was expecting the 'traditional' 18 ♘xd4.



18...♕d7

If 18...a6 Korchnoi gave 19 ♘d6, gaining the advantage of the two bishops, but 19 ♘c7 ♖e7 20 ♕c2 is also good. If 18...♕d8, then 19 ♕b3, while Black also faces a difficult test in the ending after 18...♖e7 19 ♘xa7 ♕a8 20 ♘b5 ♕xa2 21 ♕a1! ♕b3 22 ♕a3 ♕xa3 23 bxa3.

19 ♘c7 (many pointed out the tempting alternative 19 ♘xa7!? ♖a8 20 ♘b5 ♖xa2 21 ♕b3 and after the rook moves – ♘c7 or ♖c1)

19...♖c8

If 19...♖d8, with the idea of 20 ♘xe6 ♕xe6, then after 20 ♖e1! and ♘xe6 all the same Black would have acquired a weak pawn at e6.

20 ♘xe6 fxe6 (20...♕xe6? 21 ♗f5) **21 ♖e1 a6?**

The general opinion was that this was a serious loss of time, although it is already hard to offer Black any good advice: after 21...♗d6 (Korchnoi) the simplest is 22 ♕f3, while if 21...♕f7 in the hope of 22 g5?! ♘h5 and ...♘f4+ with counterplay on the dark squares (Tal, Geller), then 22 ♕e2!

Karpov clearly underestimated the consequences of the exchange on e6 and sensed too late the danger of his position. He was thinking in the general terms of positions with an 'isolani' (inferior for Black, but defensible), whereas Korchnoi exploited the concrete features of the given position. The problems facing Black proved far more serious than at first sight, and in addition they began to snowball...

22 g5 (beginning a decisive attack) **22...♘e4**

After the passive 22...♘e8 23 ♕g4 ♖c6 24 h4 (Korchnoi) Black dies of suffocation. 'Therefore Karpov sharpens the play, and his idea proves justified.' (Geller)

23 ♕g4!

In the event of 23 ♗xe4 dxe4 24 ♖xe4 ♕d5 (Keene) the play would have enlivened somewhat, although after 25 ♕e2! White would still retain an advantage (25...♕xa2 26 ♖xe6). But now, strangely enough, no satisfactory defence is apparent for Black.

23...♗b4 24 ♖e2 ♖f8 (24...♖e8? 25 f3 ♘d6 26 a3 ♗a5 27 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 28 ♗xh7+!) **25 f3!**

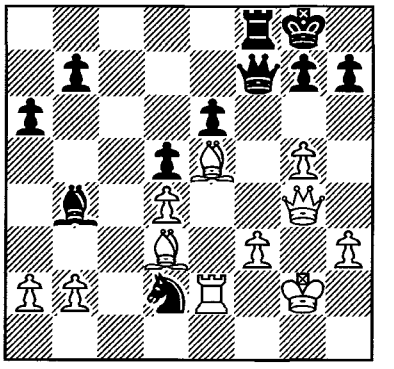
This is more effective than 25 ♗xe4 dxe4 26 ♗g3 and ♕xe4 (Korchnoi).

25...♕f7

A desperate attempt to create counterplay along the f-file. If 25...♘d6 White would have won by 26 a3 ♗a5 27 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 28 ♕h5! g6 29 ♗xg6 hxg6 30 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 31 ♕h6+ ♔g8 32 ♖xe6.

26 ♗e5! ♘d2

A crucial moment.



27 a3

Geller accompanied this move with two question marks(!) and subsequently Tal stated that 27 f4 would have given White a decisive advantage. But their variation 27...♘e4 28 ♖xe4?! dxe4 29 ♗c4 ♖e8 30 f5 is not convincing on account of 30...e3! with sharp play. The prosaic 28 a3 ♗e7 29 ♗xe4 dxe4 30 ♖xe4 would appear to be better. 27...♘c4 28 g6 ♕d7 29 gxh7+ ♔h8 is also not completely clear, although, of course, White has a big advantage. However, as we will see, 27 a3 wins by force!

27...♘xf3 28 g6?

An impulsive move, which throws away the win! 28 axb4? was even worse: 28...♘e1+ 29 ♖xe1 ♕f2+ 30 ♔h1 ♕xe1+ 31 ♕g1 ♕d2. 'But Black's clever attempt would have proved insufficient, had White played 28 ♗g3! with the threats of axb4 and ♖f2.' (Tal). Now 28...♗e7 29 ♖f2 or 28...♗e1 29 ♖xe1 ♘xe1+ 30 ♗xe1 is bad for Black, while if 28...♘h4+!? there are two worthy replies:

1) 29 ♔h2 ♘f3+ 30 ♔h1 ♗d2 (30...♗e7 31 ♖f2 or 30...♘h4 31 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 32 ♕xh4+ ♔g8 33 ♖f2 will also not do – Korchnoi) 31 g6 (this looks simpler than 31 ♖f2) 31...hxg6 32 ♖f2 ♗e3 33 ♖f1 ♗xd4 34 ♗d6 and wins;

2) 29 ♕xh4 ♕f3+ 30 ♔h2 ♕xd3 31 ♕g4!

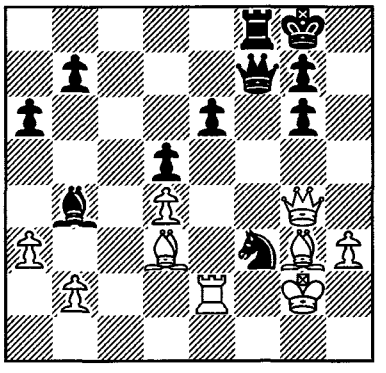
♗e7 (not 31...♗d2 32 ♕xe6+ ♔h8 33 ♗d6 ♖g8 34 ♖f2! with the threat of ♕xg8) 32 ♕xe6+ ♖f7 33 ♖f2 ♕g6 34 ♕xd5 ♔f8 35 ♖xf7+ ♕xf7 36 ♕xb7 ♗xg5 37 ♗d6+ ♔e8 38 ♕c8+ ♗d8 39 ♕c6+ ♕d7 40 ♕xa6 and the win is merely a question of time for White.

28...hxg6

This saves Black. However, also after 28...♘e1+!? (not mentioned by anyone) 29 ♔h2 ♕e7! (29...♘f3+? 30 ♔h1 hxg6 31 ♗xg6 and wins) 30 gxh7+ ♔h8 one of the white bishops is exchanged and the position remains unclear: 31 ♗g6 ♘f3+ 32 ♔h1 ♘xe5 33 dxe5 ♗c5 etc.

29 ♗g3

29 ♗xg6? is not possible on account of 29...♘h4+ or first 29...♕xg6. 29 axb4?! is also weak: 29...♘e1+ 30 ♖xe1 ♕f2+ 31 ♔h1 ♕xe1+ etc.



29...♗e7?

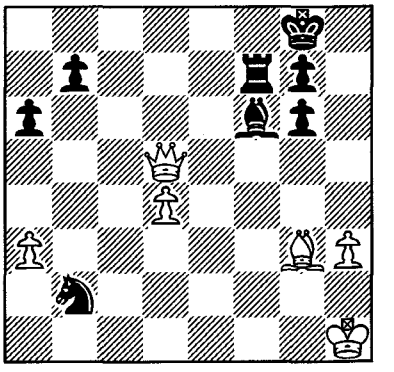
The fatal mistake. After 29...♘e1+? 30 ♖xe1 ♗xe1 31 ♗xe1 the two bishops would have decided the outcome in White's favour. However, as all the commentators pointed out, after 29...♘h4+! 30 ♔h2 ♘f3+ 31 ♔h1 the paradoxical return 31...♘h4!! would have forced a draw: 32 ♖f2? ♘f5, 32 ♖c2? ♕f3+! and 32 ♗xh4? ♕f1+! are all bad for White, while if 32 ♕xh4 (32 ♔h2 ♘f3+) there can follow either 32...♕f3+ 33 ♖g2 ♕xd3 34 axb4 ♖f1+ 35 ♖g1 (35 ♔h2 ♕d1) 35...♕f3+ 36 ♔h2 ♕e2+ 37 ♖g2 ♕d1 with a draw (Korchnoi), or 32...♗e7!? 33 ♕g4 ♕f3+, regaining the piece with equality.

30 ♖f2

Now Black suffers great loss of material, and soon the challenger obtains a technically won endgame.

30...♘e1+ 31 ♔h1 ♕xf2 (not 31...♘f3? 32 ♗xg6 ♕f6 33 ♕h5) **32 ♗xf2 ♘xd3 33 ♕xe6+ ♖f7 34 ♗g3 ♘xb2 35 ♕xd5 ♗f6**

35...b5 (Korchnoi) was slightly more tenacious, but here too after 36 ♕a8+ and ♕xa6 Black is lost.



36 ♗d6

'The threat of ♕e6 and ♕e8+ forces both black g-pawns to make a step forward, and subsequently the creation of a well-known drawing fortress proves impossible.' (Geller)

36...g5 37 ♕b3 (forcing the win of the knight; 37 ♕e4 g6 38 ♕xg6+ ♗g7 39 ♗e5 would also have won – Korchnoi) **37...♗xd4 38 ♕e6 g6 39 ♕e8+ ♔g7 40 ♗e5+ ♗xe5 41 ♕xe5+ ♔h7 42 ♕xb2 1-0**

This last move was sealed. Without resuming the game, Black resigned.

The score became 4-2, and the Soviet authorities, deciding that the match situation was becoming sharper, declared a general mobilisation. Even I, an 18-year-old, was summoned by the Chairman of the KGB in Azerbaijan and handed a demand from Moscow: it was necessary to unearth some new ideas for White in the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez! With this same aim, the head of the Sports Commit-

tee chess administration, grandmaster Krogius, phoned Baku. I was told that it was my patriotic duty: the 'traitor' had to be smashed at any price. Not having any desire to work for Karpov, I replied that I didn't see any particular need for such assistance: as it was, Korchnoi was bound to lose. But they insistently suggested that I should 'think again'.

I remember that I consulted with Botvinnik, and he said Karpov could and should be helped, but only if he wasn't leading in the match. Fortunately for me, while I was 'thinking', others helped the Soviet champion and, by breaching the Open Variation in two games, the 14th (*Game No.85*) and the 18th (*Game No.86*) he confidently won the match: 6-2. Nevertheless, as I later found out, Karpov phoned Krogius and asked whether Kasparov had sent anything from Baku: he wanted to know what his potential rival thought...

Korchnoi left the battlefield with a heavy heart: 'I endured Moscow, I endured Baguio, but Merano I could not endure. Therefore I gave my word: never to play a match with Karpov again,' he was to say ten years later. 'Not wishing to endure again that which happened to me in Merano, from being a professional I have gradually readjusted to becoming an amateur. Now I have no ambitions. I want to play interesting chess, and I am succeeding in this.'

Farewell to the Dream

In 1982 Korchnoi played in five tournaments and won three of them, but on account of the Soviet boycott he was again forced to miss the most important events of the year: Hastings, Wijk aan Zee, Mar del Plata, Sarajevo, Dortmund, London, Bugojno, Turin, Tilburg...

In the autumn Viktor Lvovich headed the Swiss team at the Olympiad in Lucerne, and in the 10th round I first met him one-to-one. In general I was then playing on board two, with Karpov on board one. But the world champion diplomatically avoided a meeting with his implacable opponent: he would have had Black and, apparently, did not consider it necessary to take a risk. Besides, it was a convenient opportunity to 'put me up' against Korchnoi and see what came of this.

A very sharp battle in a Modern Benoni developed: I played extremely riskily, but in the end, after wild complications and mutual mistakes in time-trouble, I won – this duel will be annotated anew in the planned book of my selected games.

Incidentally, before the start of the game, disdaining the official ban, I made a movement towards my opponent to make the customary handshake. But Korchnoi declined – as I initially thought, remembering his bitter experience of Baguio and Merano, where a handshake was out of the question. But later it transpired that in Lucerne the three well-known chess defectors – Viktor Korchnoi (Switzerland), Lev Alburt (USA) and Igor Ivanov (Canada) had agreed among themselves not to offer to shake hands before a game, to avoid putting me in an uncomfortable position! At the previous Olympiad (Malta 1980) Karpov had ignored Alburt's outstretched hand, and this photo had been published throughout the western press...

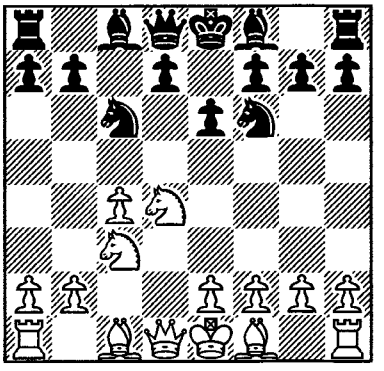
Korchnoi concluded that year with a short training match with Timman: 3-3 (+1–1=4). And at the start of 1983, just before the Candidates matches, he also played in Wijk aan Zee, where he was extremely uncompromising, but had his worst result for many years (+5–6=2). Nevertheless, he conducted the quarter-final match with Portisch (Bad Kissingen, spring 1983) as in the good old days.

The start of this match resembled the rout of Polugayevsky in Evian (1977). In the 1st game Korchnoi chose a rare variation of the English Opening, and although Black achieved good play (cf. *Volume 3, Game No.71*) Portisch used up nearly all the time on his clock, and was unable to hold a roughly equal rook endgame in time-trouble. In the 2nd game he obtained a typical 'anti-Grünfeld'

ending, favourable for White, but with his inaccurate 36th move he squandered all his winning chances. It is probable that the burden of these mistakes affected Portisch in the 3rd game, which became the culmination of the match.

Game 37
V.Korchnoi-L.Portisch
Candidates Match,
Bad Kissingen 1983, 3rd game
English Opening A33

1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 e6



This well-known opening *tabiya* has occurred about fifty times in Korchnoi's games.

6 ♘db5

Viktor Lvovich started out playing 6 ♗g5. Then he employed 6 g3, including games from his match with Spassky (1977/78), and in 1988 Karpov played this against him. He also tried 6 ♗f4 d5 (6...♗b4 7 ♘db5) 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♘xc6 bxc6 9 ♗d2, but in the end he gave priority to 6 a3 and with its help he won two important games in his matches with Sax (Wijk aan Zee 1991) and Ponomariov (Donetsk 2001).

Indeed, 6 a3!? enables the maximum number of pieces to be retained on the board and lengthy forcing lines to be avoided. I too successfully employed this move on one occasion – against Van Wely (Moscow 2004).

6...d5!

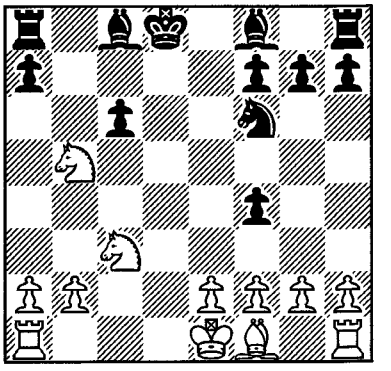
In the Korchnoi-Polugayevsky Candidates match (1980) 6...♗b4 7 ♗f4 0-0 was tried, followed by 8 ♗c7 ♕e7 9 ♗d6 ♗xd6 10 ♕xd6 (1st and 5th games) or 8 ♗d6 ♗xd6 9 ♘xd6 (7th, 9th and 13th). By gaining control of the d6-square, White obtains a slight but enduring advantage, which was confirmed by Korchnoi's wins over Andersson (Johannesburg 1981) and Y.Gruenfeld (Lucerne 1982).

7 ♗f4!

In the event of 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♘xd5 (8 e4 ♘xc3 9 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8 10 ♘xc3 ♗c5 is equal) 8...exd5 9 ♕xd5 ♗b4+ 10 ♗d2 ♗e6 11 ♕xd8+ ♖xd8 or 10...♕e7 (Suba-Portisch, Thessaloniki Olympiad 1984; Ljubojevic-Topalov, Monaco blindfold 1999) Black has excellent compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

7...e5 8 cxd5 exf4 9 dxc6 bxc6 10 ♕xd8+ ♔xd8

A popular variation at that time.



'I have devoted many days and nights to the analysis of this position,' writes Korchnoi. 'Working either alone, or with various helpers – Stean, Velimirovic and Gutman – I have spent at least 80 working hours trying to refute the opinion of theory, that the chances are roughly equal. At first sight, things seem bad for Black. His king is in the centre, and his queenside pawns are weak. But it turns out that White has problems with the development of his kingside, whereas Black can freely

develop his forces, at the same time creating threats on the queenside and in the centre. If one casts a brief glance at the position, the first move that comes to mind is 11 0-0-0+, but after 11...♗d7 the threat of ...♘g4 is very unpleasant. So that, according to theory, the only sensible move for White is 11 ♖d1+, but the 80 hours of work at home had not convinced me of the strength of this theoretical move! After thinking at the board for 20 minutes, I played differently.'

11 ♘d4!?

For Portisch, who devoutly reveres the theoretical canons, this was an unpleasant surprise! White abruptly changes the direction of the play: the knight, which usually aims for d6, now attacks the c6-pawn, and the rook, which has remained at a1, is ready to support this attack from c1.

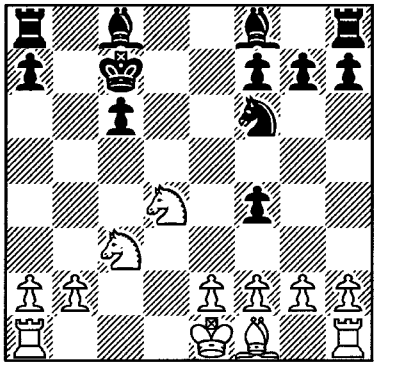
Korchnoi's decision is also interesting from the psychological point of view: it is well known that Portisch would often become flustered when there was a sharp change in the situation on the board. In general this is a problem for the majority of players who devote a lot of time to the study of the opening: they feel very much at home in 'their' set-ups, but began to 'drift' in unfamiliar positions. Korchnoi keenly sensed the moments when he could advantageously deviate from theory – such a novelty, even though objectively not very strong, had the maximum psychological effect. An ability to vary the character of the play to take account of the individual features of the opponent, which is doubly valuable in matches, was always one of his strong points.

Incidentally, in the same match Korchnoi later reverted to the usual line: 11 ♖d1+ ♗d7 12 ♘d6, and instead of the passive 12...♔e7?! 13 g3! (Polugayevsky-Gligoric, Bugojno 1982) or the risky 12...♖b8?! 13 ♘xf7+ (Andersson-Timman, Bugojno 1982) in the 5th game there followed 12...♘c7 13 ♘xf7 ♖g8 14 ♘e5 (14 g3 ♖b8! Andersson-Tal, 2nd matchgame, Malmö 1983) 14...♖b8 with quite good play for the pawn, and in the 7th – 12...♗xd6 13 ♖xd6 ♖b8! 14 b3 (14 ♖d2 ♖e8 15 g3 f3 with equality, Karpov-Polugayevsky, London 1984; H.Olafsson-Portisch, New York 1984) 14...♖b4 15 g3 ♔e7 16 ♖d2 c5 with equality (16...h5!? Kir.Georgiev-Topalov, Sarajevo 2000).

11...♔c7

A seemingly natural move, but analysts considered the king's position on the c-file to be dangerous (because of the resource ♖c1), and since that time Black began playing 11...♗d7, as chosen by Timman and Polugayevsky against Andersson (Tilburg 1983), or 11...♗b7, as played by De Firmian and Karpov against Salov (Amsterdam 1996; Dos Hermanas 1997).

Thus on the whole the variation with 6...d5! has successfully passed the endurance test. But Korchnoi's brilliant 'psychological' victory remains one of the masterpieces in chess history...

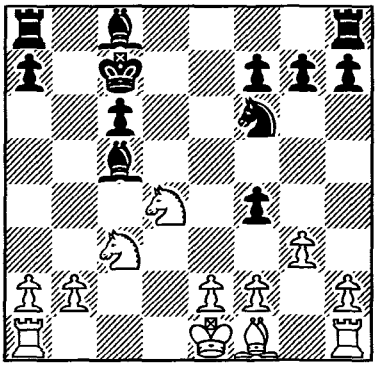


12 g3 ♗c5?!

This strengthens White's tactical threats along the c-file. 12...♗b4 was safer, 'followed by ...♗xc3 – in order to block this file,' (Korchnoi), and if 13 ♖c1, then 13...♖d8!

But 12...♖b8! was even better, and since White cannot get away with 13 0-0-0 or 13 ♘b3, Korchnoi recommended 'the sharper continuation 13 ♗g2 ♖xb2 14 ♖c1 followed by 0-0 with compensation for the pawn.' However, in my view, after 14...fxg3 15 hxg3 (15 ♘cb5+? ♔b6) 15...c5 16 ♘a4 (16 ♘db5+?

♔b8) 16...♖xa2 17 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 18 ♖xc5+ ♔d6 19 ♖c6+ ♔e7 or 19 ♖g5 ♖g8 20 ♖h4 h6 the compensation is clearly inadequate.

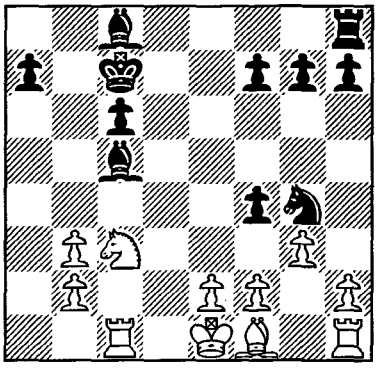


13 ♖c1! (possibly Portisch was expecting 13 ♘b3 ♗b4 with equality) **13...fxg3**

This eliminates the threat of gxf4, but, on the other hand, it opens the file for the rook at h1. Korchnoi considers two other possibilities:

1) 13...♘g4 'with the threat of seizing the initiative by ...♘xf2.' However, if 14 ♗g2 Black must play 14...♖b8!, since 14...♘xf2? does not work in view of 15 ♘cb5+! But Korchnoi was planning the gambit 14 b4!? ♗xb4 15 ♗g2 and 0-0 with somewhat the better chances for White;

2) 13...♖b8 (taking control of the b5-square and threatening ...♗xd4) 14 ♘b3 ♖xb3!? 15 axb3 ♘g4.



Analysis diagram

At the board White had been intending to play 16 ♘d5+ ♔d6 17 ♖xc5 ♔xc5 18 ♘xf4 ♔b4 19 ♘d3+ ♔xb3 20 ♔d2! ♖d8 21 ♔c1 'with some advantage', although the position is probably a draw.

Later, in analysis at home, Korchnoi 'discovered that after 17 ♖xc5 Black can interpose the unexpected 17...fxg3!!, threatening by ...♘xf2 and then ...gxh2 to win the other rook,' and he came to the conclusion that 'my variation, prepared at the board, would not have worked.' 18 hxg3?! ♔xc5 is indeed weak, but it is better to keep the exchange advantage by 18 ♖a5!, when Black faces a struggle for a draw after both 18...gxf2+ 19 ♔d2 cxd5 20 ♗g2 ♗e6 21 h3, and 18...♘xf2 19 ♗g2 ♘xh1 20 ♘e3 ♘f2 21 hxg3 ♘g4 22 ♘c4+ ♔e6 23 ♗xc6 a6 or 20...♗e6 21 ♗xh1 gxh2.

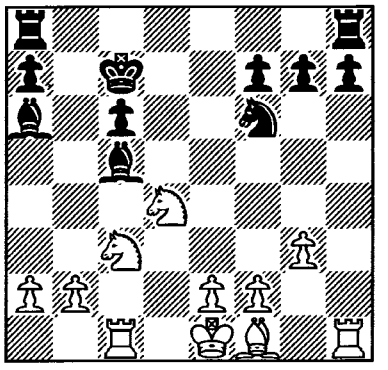
The alternative is 16 ♗g2 ♗xf2+ 17 ♔f1, when 'Black has no satisfactory retreat for his bishop in view of the knight check at b5 or d5, and on his next move White will play ♘d1, retaining a slight material advantage. Hardly a decisive one, however...' (Korchnoi). Although, in my opinion, after 17...fxg3 18 hxg3 ♗d7! (but not 18...♗xg3 19 ♗xc6! with the idea of 19...♔xc6 20 ♘e4+ and ♘xg3) it is hard to talk about any advantage at all for White.

14 hxg3 ♗a6?

Portisch cracks under the strain! Yet he only needed to play 14...♖b8, in order after 15 ♘b3 (nothing is achieved by 15 ♘d5+ ♔d6 16 ♘xf6 ♗xd4 17 ♘e4+ ♔c7) 15...♗b4 16 ♗g2 ♗d7, in the words of Korchnoi, 'to safeguard himself against White's threats and set up a long-term defence.'

Summing up the impressions of Black's 11th-14th moves (the critical phase of the game), it can he stated that he missed several safer continuations, and also some sharper ones, exploiting the dynamic features of the position – such as the presence of the pawn at f4 and the possibility of attacking the f2- and b2-pawns. However, the only move that genuinely deserves to be criticised is the 'careless',

as Korchnoi defined it, 14th, after which Black's position collapses literally like a house of cards.



15 ♘xc6!

'This unexpected move wins the game. And effectively, not only this game, but also the entire match! Indeed, Portisch was unable to recover from this blow and he lost the match 6-3!' (Korchnoi)

15...♗b7 (or 15...♔xc6 16 ♘a4 with an irresistible attack, in which the decisive role is played by the inclusion of the rook from h1)

16 ♘a4!

All the same! 'Of course, not 16 ♗g2? ♗xc6 17 ♗xc6 ♗xf2+ and Black regains the pawn,' (Korchnoi), although even here after 18 ♔xf2 ♘g4+ 19 ♔g2 ♔xc6 20 ♖h5! White would have retained the initiative.

16...♗xf2+

'If 16...♗xc6 17 ♖xc5 ♔d6 18 ♖xc6+ ♔xc6 19 ♗g2+ ♔d6 20 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 21 ♖h4, and the win for White should not present any great difficulty.' (Korchnoi)

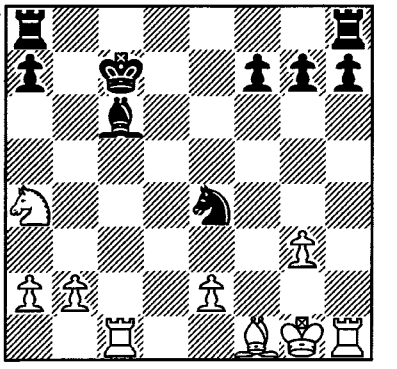
17 ♔xf2 ♘e4+

17...♗xc6 was also hopeless: 18 ♗g2 ♘g4+ 19 ♔g1 ♘e5 20 ♖h5! (using all the space of the chessboard) 20...♔d6 21 ♖d1+ ♔c7 22 ♖xe5 ♗xa4 23 ♖d4 ♖ae8 24 ♖a5 (Korchnoi), or more quickly – 23 ♖e7+ ♔b6 24 ♖b7+ ♔a6 25 ♖d6+.

18 ♔g1

White could have won quite simply by 18 ♔e3 ♗xc6 19 ♗g2 (as well as 19 ♖xc6+ ♔xc6 20 ♔xe4) 19...f5 (19...♖ae8 20 ♖xc6+) 20 ♖hf1 ♖hf8 (20...g6 21 ♗xe4 fxe4 22 ♖f6) 21 ♖xc6+ ♔xc6 22 ♖xf5 ♖xf5 23 ♗xe4+ ♖d5 24 ♘c3 – pretty geometry! However, the retreat to g1 does not spoil anything.

18...♗xc6



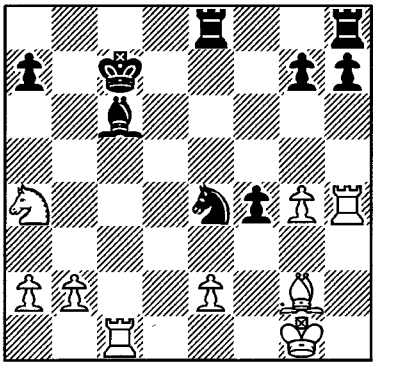
Black has temporarily restored material equality, but after the following obvious move further losses for him are inevitable.

19 ♗g2 ♖ae8 (if 19...f5, then 20 g4 g6 21 gxf5 gxf5 22 ♖h6, winning the bishop) **20 ♖h4! f5 21 g4!**

Precise geometrical motifs. As in many other games of his mature and later period, Korchnoi displays an excellent vision of the board.

21...f4

Or 21...♔d6 22 ♖xc6+ ♔xc6 23 gxf5 ♔b5 24 ♗xe4 ♔xa4 25 ♗c6+ ♔a5 26 ♗xe8 ♖xe8 27 ♖xh7 and wins (Korchnoi).



22 ♖xc6+!

Winning two pieces for a rook. 22 g5 was also good: 22...♖hf8 23 ♖xh7! (but not Korchnoi's variation 23 ♖xc6+? ♔xc6 24 ♘c3 f3! 25 ♗xf3 ♖xf3 26 exf3 ♘xg5 with equality) 23...♔d6 24 ♖xg7 ♗xa4 25 ♖c4 and wins.

22...♔xc6 23 ♘c3 ♔c5 24 ♗xe4 ♔d4 25 ♗f3

White has a decisive material advantage, and the game quickly comes to a logical conclusion.

25...♖b8 (25...♔e3 26 ♖h5!) **26 ♘a4 ♖b4 27 ♖h5! ♖d8** (27...♖xa4? 28 ♖d5+, mating or picking up the rook) **28 b3** (28 ♘c5!?) **28...h6 29 ♔f2 ♖d6 30 ♖f5 g5 31 ♖f7!** (with the threat of ♖e7-e4+) **31...♔e5 32 ♖xa7 ♖d2 33 ♘c5 ♖bd4 34 ♖a6 ♖d6 35 ♖a5! 1-0**

In the 4th game Portisch tried his utmost to draw level, and on the 33rd move he sacrificed the exchange, but in a sharp time scramble Korchnoi seized the initiative and immediately after the time control he built up an irresistible attack on the king. The score became 3½-½! The outcome of the 10-game match was decided.

In the semi-final Korchnoi was drawn against me. In my preparations I quickly established that my opponent was still at the cutting-edge of chess thinking, laying the main paths in the development of opening theory and generating new, original ideas or substantially refining old ones. This was also shown by our match.

Initially it was due to take place in the late summer in Pasadena. The intrigues which led to its collapse on account of my non-appearance, and those amazing events thanks to which the match nevertheless took place, are something that I will describe in Volume 7 (since this relates more to my struggle with Karpov). It could all have turned out differently, had not Korchnoi taken the noble decision to play the semi-final match, but exploited his formal right to go through to the final. However, he demonstrated in fact that his criticisms of the 'paper' championship were no empty words.

In September Viktor Lvovich arrived in Niksic in Yugoslavia, at the very time when I was successfully concluding a super-tournament there. Discussions about the match, sanctioned by Moscow, were initially made through an intermediary and proceeded with great difficulty. But the deadlock was broken when it was finally promised to Korchnoi that his main and lawful demand would be met – the termination of the boycott by Soviet players. As far as I am aware, an active role in these negotiations was played by two journalists: on the one side – Alexander Roshal, and on the other – the Yugoslav Brana Zrncevic.

The repairing of our personal relations was helped by the blitz tournament in Herceg Novi, organised immediately after Niksic. I won this double-round event of nine grandmasters (13½ out of 16), twice beating Korchnoi, who took second place (10½). Possibly he was impressed by the fact that I played in the same tournament as him, despite the negotiations not being completed. For him this blitz event was the first breakthrough of the seven-year blockade! Several times we were able to talk openly about the forthcoming match, which we were both impatiently awaiting.

And soon our 12-game match became a reality (London, November-December 1983). The atmosphere surrounding it proved far calmer than expected. My relations with Korchnoi were normal. I realised that, despite the enormous age difference (32 years), he was a very dangerous opponent, with a mastery of numerous chess procedures. I knew that I must not allow him to dictate the play in simple and technical positions, and in my preparations I devoted particular attention to a study of practical endings. In the match this was repaid with interest!

However, in the 1st game I lost ignominiously – this game, apparently for ever, has remained my only defeat against Korchnoi.

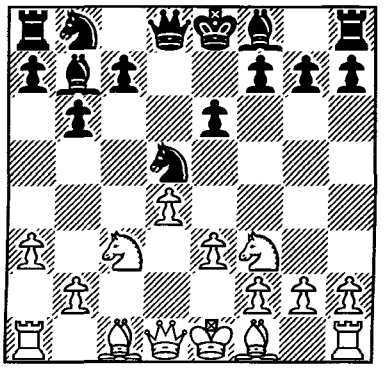
Game 38
G.Kasparov-V.Korchnoi
Candidates Match,
London 1983, 1st game
Queen's Indian Defence E12

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 (in those years Korchnoi more often replied 3...♗b4+) **4 ♘c3 ♗b7 5 a3**

This move could have been expected: I used to play this regularly and very successfully. But in my opponent's games the position had occurred only two or three times.

5...d5 6 cxd5 ♘xd5 7 e3

The more dynamic continuation 7 ♕c2 has been described in the notes to the Petrosian-Smyslov game (*Volume 3, Game No.14*). I should add 7...♘xc3 8 bxc3 ♗e7 9 e4 0-0 10 ♗d3 c5 11 0-0 ♕c7 12 ♕e2 ♘d7 13 ♗b2 ♖ac8 14 ♘d2 ♖fd8 15 ♖fd1 ♘f6 with approximate equality (Kasparov-Kramnik, Linares 2004).



7...g6!

A surprise! The usual line at that time was 7...♗e7 8 ♗b5+ c6 9 ♗d3 (*Volume 3, Game Nos.14 and 45*). The new move 7...g6 was already known (it had been played by Short and Adorjan), but before this I had not studied it seriously. And I gave insufficient attention to the five-minute game Tal-Korchnoi (Herceg Novi 1983), which went 7...♘xc3 8 bxc3 g6.

The reply of my highly experienced opponent abruptly changes the pattern of the position: it leads to a kind of Grünfeld Defence, which was part of Korchnoi's armoury long before I was born (*Game No.2*). Now it is hard for White to build up a combined attack in the centre and on the kingside (which is precisely what I had been very successful with!), and he has to seek other paths. Korchnoi keenly sensed that I would become nervous – especially in the first game of the match – and that I would lose my aim. More than that: the effect of the surprise proved stunning!

8 ♗b5+

Polugayevsky-Korchnoi (1st matchgame, London 1984) went 8 h4!? ♗g7 9 h5 c5?! 10 ♗b5+ ♗c6 11 ♗d3 ♘d7 12 e4 ♘xc3 13 bxc3 ♕c7 14 ♗g5! with an obvious advantage to White, but 9...♘d7 was safer.

Another line goes 8 ♘xd5 exd5 (not so solid is 8...♕xd5 9 ♕c2 Timman-Short, London 1982; Kramnik-Korchnoi, Monaco blindfold 1994) 9 ♗b5+ c6 10 ♗d3 ♗g7 11 e4 dxe4 12 ♗xe4 ♗a6 13 ♗g5 f6!? 14 ♗e3 0–0 15 ♕b3+ ♔h8 16 0–0–0 f5 with an unclear game (Atalik-Korchnoi, Manila Olympiad 1992) or 11 b4 0–0 12 ♗d2 ♘d7 13 ♖b1 ♖e8 14 0–0 ♘f6 with equality (Kasparov-Kramnik, internet blitz 2001).

8...c6 9 ♗d3

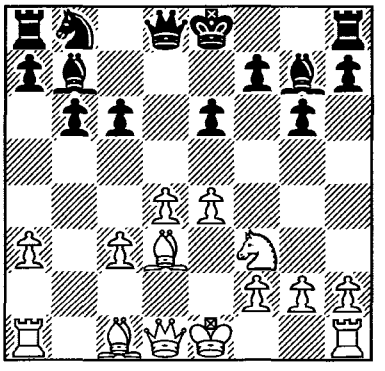
At the first attempt I played by analogy with the 7...♗e7 variation, and at the second, against Timman (Amsterdam 1991) – 9 ♗a4 ♗g7 10 e4!? (instead of the usual 10 0-0 0-0 11 e4 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 c5 13 ♗g5 ♕d6 with equality, Kupreichik-Makarichev, Kiev 1984; Radjabov-Karpov, Moscow rapidplay 2002) 10...♘xc3 11 bxc3, and after 11...♗a6!? 12 h4 ♕c7 13 e5 ♘d7 14 ♗f4 h6 15 ♕c1 0-0-0 16 ♕e3 c5 17 ♘d2 ♔b8 a sharp battle developed, leading in the end to a draw.

9...♗g7 10 e4

White gains no advantage with 10 0-0 0-0 11 ♘xd5 cxd5 (Tarjan-Adorjan, Vrsac 1983). From the mid-1990s, to play e3-e4 without allowing the exchange on c3, they began playing 10 ♘e2?! (after which 10...c5! is strong) or

10 ♘a4. But it doubtful whether Black's defences can be shaken in this way, as has been demonstrated in practice by Karpov, Short, Grischuk and Kramnik.

10...♘xc3 11 bxc3



11...c5!

A new, more energetic move than 11...0-0 (Ftacnik-Adorjan, Banja Luka 1983). Black's fianchettoed bishops strike with great force at the opponent's centre – an excellent version of the 'Grünfeld'!

12 ♗g5

It is pleasant to develop a piece with gain of tempo, but 12 ♗b5+ ♗c6 13 ♗xc6+ ♘xc6 14 ♗e3 (Ftacnik) or 12 ♗e3 0-0 13 0-0 was safer.

12...♕d6!

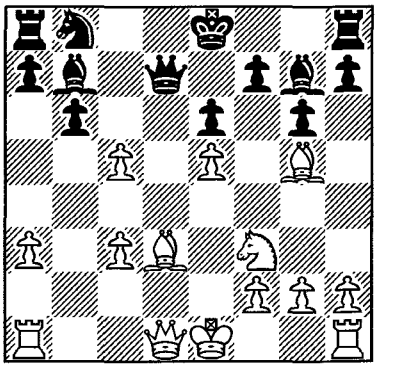
Black does not want to relieve the pressure on d4, rightly assuming that the win of a further tempo will not bring White any benefits.

13 e5 (sooner or later it is impossible to get by without e4-e5) **13...♕d7**

13...♕d5 was also possible, but Korchnoi wanted to provoke me into making the following reply.

14 dxc5?

'This move is hard to understand.' (Korchnoi). And indeed, was it worth voluntarily breaking up my pawn centre, when after the simple 14 0-0 0-0 15 ♕e2 cxd4 16 cxd4 ♘c6 17 ♕e3 or 17 ♗e4 White would not have been threatened with any danger? But I was already thinking of rapidly relieving the situation, and, as often happened with me at the time, I underestimated the dynamic factors of the position...



14...0-0! (but not 14...bxc5 15 ♗b5! ♗c6 16 a4, and only Black may have problems) **15 cxb6 axb6 16 0-0 ♕c7**

Immediately taking aim at the c3- and e5-pawns and preparing to bring out the knight. After the hasty 16...♘c6? 17 ♗e4 ♕c7 18 ♗f6! ♗xf6 19 exf6 ♕f4 20 ♕b1 (20 ♕d7!? Dvoretsky) White would have seized the initiative.

'For the pawn Black has gained pressure on White's weaknesses and a successful development of his pieces. It is clear that White cannot hold on to his material advantage. But will he be able to disrupt Black's harmonious development?' (Korchnoi)

17 ♗b5!?

White sharply changes the character of the play: immediately giving up the important e5-pawn, he tries to exploit the activity of his pieces and Black's momentary lag in development.

Initially I had been planning 17 ♖e1 with the possible sequel 17...♘c6 18 ♗e4 ♖a5 19 ♗f6 or 17...♕xc3 18 ♗e7 ♖e8 19 ♗b4, but on closer examination I discovered an interesting exchange sacrifice for Black – 17...♘d7! 18 ♗e7 (18 ♗f4 ♖fd8 is too cheerless) 18...♗xf3! (18...♘xe5 19 ♗xf8 ♘xf3+ 20 gxf3 ♖xf8 21 ♗e4 is not so clear) 19 gxf3 (19 ♕xf3?! ♘xe5 20 ♖xe5 ♗xe5 21 ♗xf8 ♖xf8, winning a pawn) 19...♗xe5 20 ♗xf8 ♗xh2+

21 ♔g2 ♖xf8, and White faces an extremely unpleasant defence.

By this point I had already used more than two hours, whereas Korchnoi's first 15 moves had taken him only four(!) minutes. True, on his next move he spent about 50 minutes...

17...♗xe5!

This reply, exploiting the undefended state of the bishops at b5 and g5, sets White the greatest problems. 17...♗xf3?! 18 ♕xf3 ♖a5 19 a4 ♗xe5 20 g3 ♕xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♗xc3 22 ♖ad1 (Korchnoi) or 22 ♖ac1! (Dvoretsky) is clearly to White's advantage. Let us also consider quiet development:

1) 17...♘c6 18 ♕d6 ♗xe5 19 ♕xc7 ♗xc7 20 ♖fd1 and Black's advantage is merely symbolic, or 18 ♗f6!? ♘xe5 19 ♘xe5 ♗xf6 20 ♘d7 (Korchnoi) 20...♗xc3 21 ♘xf8 (Dvoretsky also suggests the unclear 21 ♖c1) 21...♗xa1 22 ♘xe6 with equality;

2) 17...♘a6 18 ♗f6 ♗xf6 19 exf6 ♕xc3 20 ♕d4 ♕xd4 21 ♘xd4 ♘c7 22 ♖fb1 with equality (Korchnoi), or 18 a4 ♗xf3 19 ♕xf3 ♗xe5 20 g3 ♕xc3 21 ♕xc3 ♗xc3 22 ♖ac1 with full compensation for the sacrificed pawn.

18 ♗h6 (of course, not 18 ♘xe5? ♕xe5 19 ♗h6 ♕xb5 20 ♕d4 e5 and wins) **18...♗g7?!**

Having obtained a permanently better pawn structure, Korchnoi wants to avoid any lack of clarity and to decide the outcome with the help of simplification and purely technical means (as it later transpired, this was the corner-stone of his match strategy).

18...♖d8! suggests itself, although this would have allowed a queen sacrifice – 19 ♘xe5?! ♖xd1 20 ♖axd1, and if 20...f6?, then 21 ♘d7! ♘xd7 22 ♖xd7 ♕c5 23 ♖g7+! ♔h8 24 ♖xb7 ♕xb5 25 ♗g7+ ♔g8 26 ♗xf6 with sufficient counterplay. Even so, after 20...♘c6 21 ♘g4 ♘e5! 22 ♘f6+ ♔h8 (Dvoretsky) or 20...♗c6!? Black could have parried the opponent's threats and gradually converted his material advantage.

Probably, all that remained for White was the patient 19 ♕e2, for example: 19...♗xf3 20 ♕xf3 ♖a5 21 a4 ♗xh2+ 22 ♔h1 ♖d5 23 g4! ♗e5 24 ♖ad1 with good compensation for the pawn, or 19...♗g7 20 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 21 ♕e3 ♗xf3 22 ♕xf3 ♘a6 23 ♗xa6! ♖xa6 24 ♖fb1 with an inferior but defensible position.

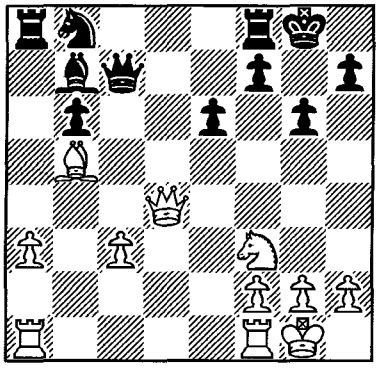
19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7

After the exchange of the dark-squared bishops White has gained an opportunity to create counterplay on the weakened dark squares.

20 ♕d4+ ♔g8

In the event of 20...f6?! 21 ♘g5 ♕e7 (21...♕c8? 22 ♖ae1 e5 23 ♖xe5! and wins – Korchnoi) 22 ♖ae1 e5 23 f4 Black would have defended by 23...♘c6 24 ♕xb6 fxg5 (Dvoretsky) or 23...♘a6!? 24 ♘f3 (24 fxe5 fxg5 25 e6+ ♔h6 is insufficient) 24...e4 etc. But after 22 ♘h3! (this move is also recommended by Dvoretsky) White, who is threatening ♕xb6, would have retained some advantage.

At any event, a further weakening of his king's defences was not at all to Korchnoi's taste.



21 ♘g5?

The choice of this incorrect route for the knight fully justifies Black's avoidance of complications three moves earlier.

Only centralisation by 21 ♘e5!, which involves a piece sacrifice, would have given an attack sufficient for at least a draw: 21...♖d8! (21...f6? 22 ♘c4 or 21...♖a5 22 c4 ♘c6 23 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 24 f4 is less good – Korchnoi) 22 ♕h4! ♖d5 23 ♘g4 ♖xb5! 24 ♖ad1! (unfortu-

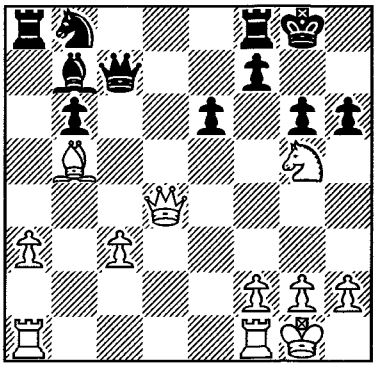
nately, I overlooked this strong reply; after 24 ♘f6+? ♔f8 the following are all bad for White: 25 ♘xh7+ ♔g7, 25 ♕xh7 ♘d7!, or 25 ♕h6+ ♔e7 26 ♘g8+ ♔d7 27 ♖ad1+ ♔c6! Dvoretsky) 24...♖d5! (24...♘c6? 25 ♖d7!; 24...♗d5? 25 c4! ♕xc4 26 ♖c1 and wins – Korchnoi; 24...g5 25 ♘f6+) 25 c4! and now:

1) 25...♖xd1 26 ♘f6+! ♔f8 27 ♖xd1 (27 ♕h6+ ♔e7 28 ♘g8+ ♔e8 or 28...♔d7 29 ♖xd1+ ♔c6 30 ♕e3 ♖a5 also leads to a draw – Dvoretsky) 27...h5 28 ♕g5 ♖a5 29 ♕h6+ ♔e7, and 'nothing better than perpetual check can be found for White' (Korchnoi);

2) 25...♖d6 26 ♘f6+ ♔f8 27 ♕f4 (or 27 ♕h6+ ♔e7 28 ♕h4 ♔f8 with a draw – Dvoretsky) 27...♖c6 28 ♕h6+ ♔e7 29 ♘g8+ ♔e8 30 ♘f6+ with perpetual check.

After missing this opportunity, White completely concedes the initiative to his opponent.

21...h6

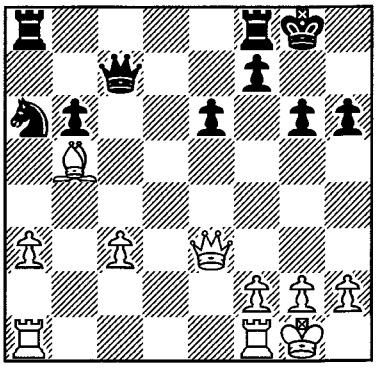


22 ♘e4 ♗xe4 (with the exchange of this powerful knight, all my hopes of an attack disappear) **23 ♕xe4 ♘a6!**

Simple and good. After 23...♘d7 White would have been saved by the double attack 24 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 25 ♕e3, whereas now he has to choose the lesser of two evils.

24 ♕e3?!

Again a weak move. The black knight clearly has better prospects than the white bishop, and after 24 ♗xa6! ♖xa6 25 ♕e3 'Black's advantage would have been merely theoretical' (Korchnoi). At the board I did not like 25...♖fa8! (25...♔g7 26 ♖fb1) 26 ♕xh6?! ♖xa3 27 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 28 h4 ♕xc3 29 h5 ♖a1 30 hxg6 ♖xf1+ 31 ♔xf1 ♕d3+ 32 ♔g1 ♕b1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕xg6, when Black probably has a won queen ending. And if 26 ♖fb1 (26 ♖ab1!?) 26...♖xa3 27 ♖xa3 ♖xa3 28 g3 (Dvoretsky), then 28...b5!, successfully avoiding the endgame with four pawns against three on one wing. But the passive 25 ♕b4 ♖c8 26 ♖fc1 would have left White good chances of a draw.



24...♕c5!

Another unpleasant surprise. I was expecting 24...h5 25 ♗xa6 ♖xa6 26 ♖fb1 ♖fa8 27 ♖b3. But now things are far more difficult for White, since Black, by retaining his knight, obtains additional possibilities of fighting for an advantage. In such a situation it is easy to slip up, especially when feeling grieved by the unsuccessful outcome of the opening.

25 ♕xc5

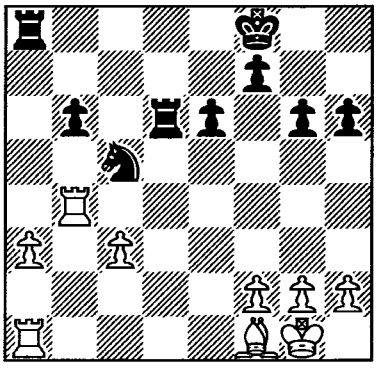
Alas, this is forced: 25 ♕e2 ♘c7 is bad for White, as is 25 ♗xa6 ♕xe3 26 fxe3 ♖xa6 – because of the appearance of a third weakness (the e3-pawn) White has a very difficult rook endgame.

25...♘xc5 26 ♖fb1 ♖fd8 27 ♗f1?!

Why so far? 27 a4 came into consideration, or else 27 ♗c6 ♖ac8 28 ♗f3 (28 ♖xb6? ♖d6 29 ♗b7 ♖xb6 30 ♗xc8 ♖c6 and wins) 28...♖d6, and now not 29 a4 ♘d7 30 ♖b3 ♖c5 'followed by the switching of the black king to the centre and to the queenside'

(Korchnoi), but 29 ♖b4!? ♘d3 30 ♖d4 ♖xd4 31 cxd4 with chances of a draw, although after 31...♔f8 (Dvoretsky) White's problems are not yet at an end.

27...♖d6 28 ♖b4 ♔f8



29 a4

Short of time, it was not easy to decide to give up a pawn by 29 ♖ab1 ♖xa3 30 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 31 ♖xb6 ♖xc3. But in principle, as has already been mentioned, the exchange of the queenside pawns and the transition into ending with three pawns against four on the kingside is an important drawing resource for White.

29...♖a5

Eliminating the threat of a4-a5 and fixing the weakness at a4. 29...♔e7 also came into consideration, with the idea of 30 ♗b5 ♖ad8, while 'in the event of 30 ♖ab1 ♖xa4 (30...♘xa4? 31 ♖a1) 31 ♖xb6 ♖xb6 32 ♖xb6 ♘e4 White would have faced a lengthy and unpleasant defence.' (Dvoretsky)

30 g3?!

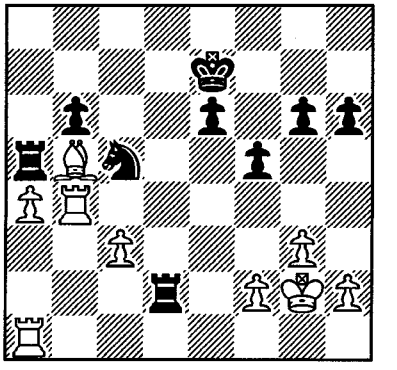
Another hasty move in time-trouble. 30 ♗b5 was better, and after 30...♘xa4?! 31 ♗xa4 b5 32 ♖xb5 ♖xa4 33 ♖bb1 ♖c4 34 ♖a3 ♖d3 35 ♖c1 or 30...♔e7 31 ♔f1 White could have hoped for a draw.

30...♔e7 31 ♔g2 f5! (securing the e4-square for the knight) **32 ♗b5**

'It was bad to play 32 f3 ♖d2+ 33 ♔g1 ♘d7 34 ♗b5 ♘e5, when the black pieces become very active, but the cool-headed 32 ♖a2!? ♘e4 33 ♖c4 *(according to Dvoretsky, 33 ♖c2 is slightly more accurate – G.K.)* would have forced Black to look for more subtle ways to strengthen his position.' (Korchnoi). Thus 33...b5?! is over-hasty on account of 34 ♖xe4! fxe4 35 ♗xb5 (Dvoretsky), but 33...e5 would retain a stable advantage.

32...♖d2?!

An over-hasty move... which produces a wonderful effect! Activity should have been begun only after 32...♔d8 and ...♔c7. In addition, Black had a good plan involving the advance of his kingside pawns: 32...g5 etc.



33 ♖d4?

In serious time-trouble White overlooks the loss of a pawn. It was also bad to play 33 ♗c6? ♘d3 34 ♖xb6 ♘xf2! (34...♖xf2+ 35 ♔g1 ♖c2 36 ♖b5 etc.) 35 ♖b5 (35 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 36 ♔h1 ♖e5!) 35...♖a6 36 ♖b7+ ♔f6 37 ♗b5 ♘g4+ 38 ♔g1 ♖ad6! or 36 ♗b7 ♖ad6 37 a5 ♖6d3! 38 a6 (38 ♖b4 ♖xc3 or 38 ♔g1 ♘h3+ 39 ♔h1 ♖xc3 40 ♗g2 ♖cc2 does not help) 38...♘d1+ 39 ♔f1 ♖e3!, when the knight and two rooks imprison the white king.

Only 33 ♖ab1! (exploiting the drawback to Black's previous move – the weakening of the b6-pawn) gave any real chances of saving the game: 33...♘e4 34 ♖1b2 ♖xb2 35 ♖xb2 ♘xc3 (35...♔d6 36 ♗d3 with equality) 36 ♗c6 ♘xa4 (36...♔d6 37 ♖xb6 ♔c7(5) 38 ♖b3 or 36...♖a6 37 ♖b3 ♘d5 38 ♗b7 ♖xa4 39 ♗xd5 exd5 40 ♖xb6 is no better) 37 ♗xa4 ♖xa4 38 ♖xb6 (Dvoretsky), and the most probable

outcome of the 'four against three' rook ending is a draw.

33...♖xd4 34 cxd4 ♘xa4!

A simple tactical stroke, which takes play into an easily won rook endgame.

35 ♖xa4 (35 ♗xa4 b5 or 35 ♗c6 ♘c3 36 ♖e1 ♖a2 was even worse) **35...♖xb5 36 ♖a7+ ♔d6!**

The excessively cautious 36...♔f6?! would have left White with some chances: 37 h4! ♖d5 38 ♖b7 b5 39 ♔f3.

37 ♖h7?!

Korchnoi gives two other continuations, which 'would have demanded great resourcefulness of Black to achieve a win':

1) 37 ♔f3 ♖b3+ 38 ♔e2 b5 39 h4 h5 40 ♖g7 ♔d5 41 ♖xg6 b4 42 ♖h6 ♖b2+ 43 ♔e3 b3 44 ♖h8 (44 ♖xh5 ♖e2+!) 44...♖c2! 45 ♖b8 ♔c4, and the b-pawn with the support of the king decides the outcome: 46 ♖c8+ ♔b4 47 ♖b8+ ♔c3 48 ♖c8+ ♔b2 49 ♖b8 ♖c4 50 ♔f4 ♖xd4+ 51 ♔g5 ♔c3 52 ♔xh5 b2 53 ♖xb2 ♔xb2 54 ♔g5 ♖g4+ 55 ♔f6 f4 56 ♔xe6 ♖xg3!;

2) 37 h4 h5 38 ♔f3 (38 ♖g7?! ♖d5 39 ♖xg6 b5 40 ♔f3 ♖xd4 41 ♖h6 b4 etc.) 38...e5! 39 ♖g7 (after 39 dxe5+ ♖xe5 the white king is cut off and the b-pawn queens) 39...exd4 40 ♖xg6+ ♔d5! 41 ♖g5 ♔c4 42 ♖xh5 ♖c5! (42...d3 43 ♖h6! is far more complicated) 43 ♖h8 b5 44 h5 b4 45 h6 b3 46 ♖b8 ♖c7 or 46 h7 ♖c7 and wins.

37...h5 38 ♖g7?! (according to Korchnoi, 38 ♔f3 was again more tenacious, as in the variation given above) **38...♖d5 39 ♖xg6 b5 40 ♔f3 b4**

'It is a question of style: 40...♖xd4 would also have won without difficulty.' (Korchnoi)

41 ♔e3 (41 ♖g8 ♖b5) **41...b3 42 ♔d2** (42 ♔d3? ♖b5) **42...♖xd4+ 43 ♔c3 b2! 44 ♔xb2 ♖d2+ 45 ♔c3 ♖xf2 46 h4**

Here the curtain could have been lowered, but through inertia I continued to resist. After 46 h3 the simplest is 46...h4 47 g4 (47 gxh4 ♖f3+ and ...♖xh3) 47...♔e5 48 ♖g5 (48 gxf5 ♖xf5 and wins) 48...♖f3+ 49 ♔d2 ♔f4 50 ♖h5 fxg4 (Korchnoi) or 50 ♖g8 ♖xh3 51 gxf5 ♔xf5, avoiding the problematic rook ending with f- and h-pawns.

46...f4! 47 ♖g5 (47 ♖h6 fxg3 48 ♖xh5 ♖f5! or 47 g4 hxg4 48 ♖xg4 e5 is also hopeless for White) **47...♖f3+ 48 ♔d4 ♖xg3 49 ♖xh5 ♖e3! 50 ♖h6 ♔e7 51 h5 e5+ 52 ♔d5 f3 0-1**

A painful defeat! However, four successive draws brought me back to normal, and the turning point came in the 6th game. It was adjourned in an unclear, but probably drawn position. On the resumption, attempting to sharpen the play, Korchnoi chose a continuation that was not the best, and on the 57th move a prosaic rook endgame arose, where White had to display a certain accuracy to gain a draw. Korchnoi needed to find an advantageous way of giving up his rook for a passed pawn, but he transposed moves, missing an intermediate check, and his position became hopeless.

In the end I won 7-4 (+4–1=6). In an interview after the match Korchnoi admitted: 'After the 6th game I lost faith in my technique and my seconds. The scores became equal, but psychologically the match was most. My pre-match impression of Kasparov, as a player of a single knock-out blow, was faulty. Kasparov is a highly technical player for his age. He goes in for a risk only when he is confident that such a step is justified.'

Certain western commentators suggested that I should express my gratitude to Korchnoi, for the fact that he accelerated by chess maturity and helped me to grasp the subtleties of positional play. Indeed, the benefit from this match is hard to overestimate.

Thus at the end of 1983 the 'perpetual' challenger essentially said farewell to his dream of becoming world champion. In the Candidates tournament of the next cycle (Montpellier 1985) he finished well behind the leaders, although he continued to win or share first places in other tournaments: in 1984

there was Wijk aan Zee, Beersheva, Sarajevo and a win against Polugayevsky on board three in the second USSR-Rest of the World match, in 1985 – Tilburg, Lucerne (board one in the World Team Championship) and Brussels...

Against the King's Indian

Even in the later period of his career, playing up to 150 games in a year, Korchnoi has continued to readjust and harmonise his style. As he himself writes: 'My games with Panno (1985), Arnason (1987) and Pinter (1988) are an object of pride for me, a demonstration of victory of character over harmful habits.' Indeed, Korchnoi began fighting more keenly for the initiative with White, which in combination with his fine technique gave him excellent results.

Very typical is the introduction to his game with Seirawan (Lugano 1986): 'In his time Mikhail Botvinnik advised masters and grandmasters to plan their opening repertoire, such that they would not have to battle against their own opening systems. Botvinnik, it is true, played not more than 50 games in a year, and it was comparatively easy for him to follow his own advice. At the end of the 20th century, chess life has become more intensive. The number of top-class grandmasters has grown – not like in Botvinnik's time, when there were just a few. There are now players who, after making a thorough study of some opening, happily play it for both sides... For a long time I tried to follow Botvinnik's advice. But on one occasion I grew bold. It happened like this. During a tournament I began preparing for a game with Boris Spassky where I would be Black. I carefully studied how he played the Closed Variation of the Sicilian. His handling of this position impressed me. In my attempts to refute his strategy I was unsuccessful – I drew that game with difficulty. But with the knowledge gained, I myself decided to try playing like Spassky. Since I rarely play 1 e4, I decided to employ his ideas against 1 c4 devotees. It is true that Black is a tempo down, but this did not concern me. I defeated in succession Seirawan, Suba and Karlsson. "And now," I decided, "having gained this experience playing Black, why not play this position as White!?" '

There followed **1 c4 e5 2 g3 ♘c6 3 ♗g2 g6 4 ♘c3 ♗g7 5 d3 d6 6 ♖b1 f5 7 b4 ♘f6 8 b5 ♘e7 9 ♕b3!? h6 10 e3 0-0 11 ♘ge2 ♔h7 12 a4 ♖b8 13 ♗a3 ♗c6 14 0-0 g5 15 d4!**, and White, after seizing the initiative, ultimately gained a spectacular win. Thus over a period of four months Korchnoi defeated Seirawan in this set-up both with Black (Montpellier Candidates 1985) and with White (Lugano 1986).

In the preceding chapters you have been able to acquaint yourself with Korchnoi's opening repertoire as Black. It is curious that, among his variety of replies to 1 d4, he has hardly ever played the King's Indian Defence – seemingly an ideal weapon for a player of counterattacking style. Evidently, as a fervent 'Grünfeld' player, he did not like shutting in his bishop at g7. On the contrary, all his life he has happily played against the King's Indian as White, employing virtually all the variations: with the development of the bishop at g2, and the Sämisch, and the classical with ♘f3 and ♗e2.

Korchnoi's plans have always been deeply thought out. He has made an especially great contribution to the reassessment of the Taimanov variation with 10 ♗e3, which was buried in 1953 and revived in 1987. From generation to generation a stereotype was passed on, even captivating Fischer: 'Black's kingside attack has practically been worked out to a forced mate!' However, thanks to Korchnoi, everyone began looking differently at the potential of these positions. It turned out that White is not so defenceless on the kingside and that he has interesting offensive possibilities on the queenside.

The first game on this theme, played in the Interzonal tournament (Zagreb 1987), resounded like thunder from a clear sky. It

clearly expresses Korchnoi's eternal striving to search for unexpected, original paths. Not without reason was it judged to be the most important theoretical game of *Informator* Volume 44.

Game 39
V.Korchnoi-K.Hulak
Interzonal Tournament,
Zagreb 1987, 10th round
King's Indian Defence E99

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 0-0 5 ♗e2 d6 6 d4 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 (7...♘bd7 – *Game No.47*) **8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♘e1**

Earlier Korchnoi successfully played both 9 ♘d2 (against Geller, 1st match game, Moscow 1971), and 9 ♗d2 (against Byrne, Leningrad Interzonal 1973). And once he tried the eccentric 9 a4, aiming for a favourable version of his favourite plan with ♗e3, but after 9...a5! 10 ♘e1 ♘d7 11 ♗e3 f5 12 f3 ♘c5 13 ♘d3 b6 14 b4 ♘xd3 15 ♕xd3 axb4 16 ♘b5 ♔h8 Black, by refraining from ...f5-f4, obtained a good position (Korchnoi-Kasparov, Barcelona 1989).

9...♘d7

Hindering the typical c4-c5 breakthrough. The alternative is 9...♘e8 (*Game Nos.40 and 41*), but not 9...c5?! 10 f4! (Korchnoi-Ciocaltea, Nice Olympiad 1974).

10 ♗e3

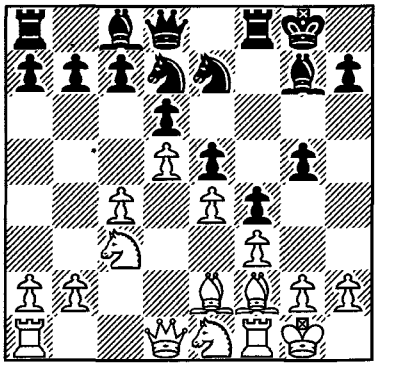
For a long time this move was considered less appropriate than 10 ♘d3 (*Volume 4, Game No.64*). 'The regrouping planned by White looks rather slow, but what can be done! – I chose this variation for myself many years ago and I have devoted hundreds of hours of home analysis to it.' (Korchnoi)

10...f5 11 f3 f4

They more rarely play 11...♖f7 (Korchnoi-Spasov, Maribor 1995) or 11...h6 12 ♘d3 b6 13 b4 g5 14 ♖c1 (14 c5 ♘f6 15 cxd6 cxd6 16 b5 ♘g6 17 ♘b4 ♘f4 is unclear, Korchnoi-Yurtaev, Manila Olympiad 1992) 14...♘f6 15 ♘f2 f4 16 ♗d2 h5 17 ♔h1!? (the prelude to a clever plan) 17...♘g6 18 c5 ♖f7 19 cxd6 cxd6 20 ♖g1! ♗h6 21 g3!... 1-0 (Korchnoi-Spraggett, Manila Olympiad 1992).

12 ♗f2 g5

The main *tabiya* of the 10 ♗e3 variation, stemming from the historic 1953 games Eliskases-Gligoric and Taimanov-Najdorf (*Volume 4, Game No.29*).



Mutual flank storms are in prospect, with Black's attack looking the more dangerous: he has the white king in his sights! And the aforementioned games ended in disaster for White. But Korchnoi has his own conception, reflecting his inherent optimism: 'Black is advancing his pawns away from his king, leaving it completely without protection. If the opponent does not flinch, if the attack will be repulsed, the checkmating of the bare black king will begin. That is what in fact happened in many games that I have played with this variation.'

13 ♘b5!?

An uncommonly paradoxical move in a position which had seemingly been exhaustively studied. However, it involves a sound strategic idea: by ♘a7xc8 to eliminate the opponent's powerful bishop and sharply reduce the effect of the ...g5-g4 breakthrough.

Soon an acceptable defence was found for Black, and then Viktor Lvovich introduced 13 a4!? (regarding the previous moves 13 ♘d3 and 13 b4 – cf. *Volume 4, Game No.29*), for example:

1) 13...h5 14 ♘b5 ♘f6?! 15 ♘xa7 ♗d7 16 ♘b5 g4 (Korchnoi-Hellers, Stockholm 1987), and here Korchnoi recommended 17 g3!? and ♘g2, or 14 a5!, as played by him against Forster (Switzerland 1994) and Xie Jun (Prague 1995);

2) 13...♘g6 14 a5! (after 14 ♘d3 ♘f6 15 c5 h5 16 h3 ♖f7 17 c6 White's offensive is halted by 17...a5! Korchnoi-Kasparov, Amsterdam 1991) 14...♖f7 (14...a6 15 ♘d3 ♘f6 16 c5 h5 17 cxd6 cxd6 18 ♘a4... 1-0 Korchnoi-Gelfand, Tilburg 1992; 14...♔h8 15 ♘d3 ♖g8?! 16 c5 ♗f8 17 c6! bxc6 18 ♘b4! ♘e7 19 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 20 dxc6 with an obvious advantage, Korchnoi-Shirov, Horgen 1994) 15 b4 ♘f6 16 c5, as Korchnoi defeated Nunn (Amsterdam 1990) and J.Polgar (Pamplona 1990), or even 15 c5!? ♘xc5 16 ♗xc5 dxc5 17 ♗c4 ♔h8 18 a6... 1-0 (Korchnoi-P.Popovic, Brno 1992);

3) 13...a5!? 14 ♘d3 b6 15 b4 axb4 (15...h5?! is worse: 16 bxa5 ♖xa5 17 ♘b5 ♘f6 18 ♗e1 ♖a6 19 a5... 1-0 Korchnoi-Wan der Wiel, Brussels blitz 1987) 16 ♘xb4 ♘f6 17 ♖a3 ♗d7 with chances for both sides (Yusupov-Kasparov, Erevan Olympiad 1996).

But since 1996, considering the attacking resources of 13 a4 to be exhausted, Korchnoi switched to the no less complicated 13 ♖c1, with the idea of 13...♘g6 14 c5! ♘xc5 15 b4 ♘a6 16 ♘d3 (16 ♘b5 ♗d7 17 ♘xa7 is unclear, Korchnoi-M.Ivanov, Enghien les Bains 1997) 16...h5 17 ♘b5 ♗d7 18 a4 ♗h6 19 ♖c3, as in the games Piket-Kasparov (Linares 1997) and Korchnoi-Cvitan, Pula 1997).

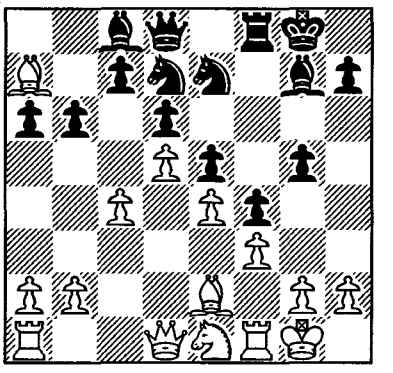
13...a6?!

Subsequently, players with Black employed both the gambit idea 13...♘f6!? 14 ♘xa7 ♗d7 (Benjamin-Nunn, Hastings 1987/88), and also the sound 13...b6! 14 b4 (14 a4 a6 15 ♘c3 a5!) 14...a6 15 ♘c3 (15 ♘a3?! h5 Khuzman-Smirin, Sverdlovsk 1987) 15...♘g6, 15...♘f6 16 c5 ♖b8, or 15...h5 (Korchnoi-Ye Jiangchuan, Novi Sad Olympiad 1990), and in general they were able to neutralise 13 ♘b5.

14 ♘a7! (of course!) **14...♖xa7?!**

On encountering an incredible innovatory idea of his opponent, Hulak tries to refute it – by trapping the bishop. But everything has been anticipated by White! Evidently 14...♘f6 (Korchnoi) 15 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 16 c5 g4 was better, although it is hard for Black to count on any real attack without the c8-bishop.

15 ♗xa7 b6



16 b4!

The only way! 16 c5 dxc5! 17 ♕a4 ♗b7!? 18 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 19 ♕xa6 ♕a8 20 a4 (20 ♕b5 ♖d8) 20...♘c8 (20...♘b8? 21 ♕c4) 21 a5 (Korchnoi) was inaccurate on account of 21...♘b8! 22 ♕c4 ♘d6 and ...♕xa7.

Now, however, it turns out that the bishop at a7, although cut off, is still alive. And White, exploiting this factor, succeeds in breaking up the opponent's queenside. My trainers and I looked at this position back in 1988, when I was regularly playing the King's Indian Defence, and we came to the conclusion that Black shouldn't play this.

16...♗b7

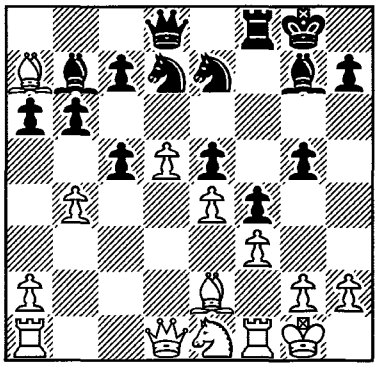
With the threat of ...♕a8 or ...♘c8. 16...c5? does not work on account of 17 dxc6 ♘xc6 18 ♕d5+, while after 16...♘f6 17 c5 g4 18 ♖c1 or 16...♘g6 17 ♘d3 ♘f6 18 c5 White gets his attack in first.

17 c5!

The strongest move. 17 ♕a4 ♘c8 18 c5 dxc5 19 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 20 ♕xa6 has also been played, but after 17...c5! White's advantage evaporates.

17...dxc5

An important psychological nuance: the play begins to develop on the queenside and Black is obliged to forget about his attack on the king. It was bad to play 17...bxc5? 18 bxc5 (18 ♕a4!?) 18...♕a8 (18...dxc5 19 ♖c1, or 19 ♖b1 ♕a8 20 d6!) 19 ♗b6! cxb6 20 c6 and wins (Korchnoi).



18 ♖c1! (of course, not 18 bxc5? ♘xc5 19 ♖c1 ♕d6 with the threat of ...♖a8) **18...♘c8**

If 18...cxb4 the strongest is 19 d6!, for example: 19...♘c6 20 ♗xa6 ♗xa6 21 ♖xc6 (Korchnoi) 21...cxd6 22 ♖xd6 ♖f7 23 ♗xb6!, or 19...cxd6 20 ♕xd6 ♖f6 21 ♕c7 ♕c8 22 ♘d3 ♖c6 (22...a5 23 ♘f2) 23 ♖xc6 ♘xc6 24 ♕xc8+ (24 ♗xb6!?) 24...♗xc8 25 ♖c1 ♘xa7 (25...♗b7 26 ♘xb4!) 26 ♖c7 with a decisive invasion (Karolyi-Kupreichik, Lvov 1988).

19 bxc5 ♗a8 (after 19...♘xc5 20 ♖xc5! bxc5 21 ♗xc5 ♘d6 22 ♕b3(a4) and ♘d3 White has an obvious positional advantage) **20 c6**

Completely shutting the c8-bishop out of the game. White could also have considered 20 ♗xb6!? cxb6 21 c6 ♘c5 22 ♘d3 ♘xd3 23 ♕xd3 b5 24 ♕a3 ♕b6+ 25 ♕c5, denying Black any counterplay and condemning him to a difficult defence.

20...♘f6 21 ♗xb6 ♘xb6 22 ♗xa6 g4?!

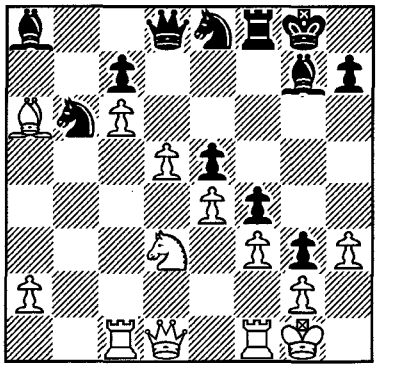
A routine attacking attempt, which merely leads to a new weakening. Much better chances were offered by 22...♕b8! (22...♕d6 23 ♘d3 and ♘c5) 23 ♔h1 ♕a7 24 ♕e2 (Korchnoi) 24...♘h5!? True, with the energetic 25 d6! White could have continued playing for a win: 25...♖f6?! 26 d7 ♘xd7 27 g4! ♘g3+ 28 hxg3 ♗xc6 29 gxf4 exf4 30 ♗b5, or 25...cxd6 26 c7 ♗b7 (26...♘c8 27 ♕d3 ♕b6 28 ♕b3+ ♕xb3 29 axb3 ♘f6 30 ♘d3) 27 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 28 ♕d3 ♘c8 29 ♕c4+ ♔h8 30 ♘d3 etc.

23 ♘d3 (the knight heads along the route c5-e6) **23...g3?!**

23...h5 or 23...♕b8 (Korchnoi) was more tenacious, although this would hardly have affected the outcome of the game.

24 h3 (killing any counterplay) **24...♘e8**

The immediate 24...♕b8 would have allowed 25 d6. Black establishes a blockade at d6, but now the a-pawn begins advancing.



25 ♘c5 ♕b8 26 a4 ♘d6 27 a5 ♘bc8 28 ♔h1 ♕a7 29 ♕c2 ♘e7 30 ♖b1 ♘g6 (or 30...♖b8 31 ♖xb8+ ♕xb8 32 ♗b7) **31 ♖fc1 ♗f6 32 ♗f1 ♗xc6**

Forced: White's pressure on the queenside was already quite unbearable. 32...♕xa5 was not possible in view of 33 ♖a1 ♕b4 34 ♖cb1 ♕d4 35 ♘e6.

33 dxc6 ♕xa5 34 ♖a1 ♕b4 35 ♘e6 1-0

It is staggering that even at the age of 56 he was able to win the Interzonal tournament: 1. Korchnoi – 11 out of 16; 2-3. Ehlvest and Seirawan – 10, ahead of Nikolic, Torre, Polugayevsky, Miles... And early in the same year 1987 Korchnoi shared 1st place with Short in Wijk aan Zee, establishing a record for the

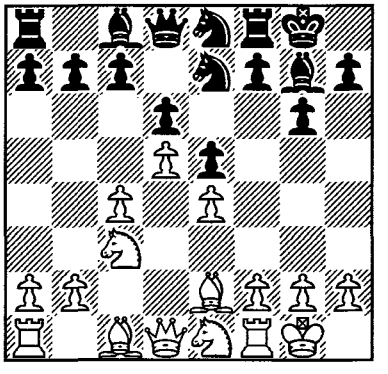
number of victories (four!) in this prestigious traditional tournament.

His subsequent attempts to 'refute' the King's Indian Defence were also very successful: after the game with Hulak he gained a number of striking wins in the variation with 13 a4!? Here his only failure over a period of eight years was his game with me in Amsterdam (1991). A year later we again clashed in a King's Indian at the European Team Championship in Debrecen, and I only escaped by the skin of my teeth. And soon Korchnoi tried to improve White's play in a game with Shirov.

Game 40
V.Korchnoi-A.Shirov
Buenos Aires 1993, 5th round
King's Indian Defence E98

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 g6 3 e4 d6 4 d4 ♗g7 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♘e1 ♘e8

This move, employed by me in games with Shirov (Manila Olympiad 1992) and Korchnoi (Debrecen 1992), used to be considered weaker than 9...♘d7 (*Game No.39*). This may be so, but 9...♘e8 also has the right to exist. The knight defends the c7-square against the invasion of the white pieces, which reduces the effectiveness of the standard plan with 10 ♘d3 and c4-c5. However, White has other possibilities.



10 ♗e3

Of course, Korchnoi is not satisfied with the comparatively safe – but also inoffensive! – continuation 10 ♘d3 f5 11 f4 (Petrosian-Tal, Bled 1961).

10...f5 11 f3 f4

11...c5 (*Game No.41*) is another idea. I should also mention 11...♔h8 12 a4 (12 c5!?) 12...♘g8 13 c5 ♗h6 14 ♗f2 ♘gf6 15 a5 ♘h5 16 g3 (Korchnoi-J.Polgar, Prague 1995) or 16 ♘d3! (Gelfand-J.Polgar, Dos Hermanas 1996) with a complicated game, somewhat better for White.

12 ♗f2 h5

Korchnoi was surprised that I should recommend this move, and not 12...g5, after which he played 13 c5 ♘g6 14 a4 ♖f7?! 15 ♘d3 ♗f8 16 a5 ♖g7 17 a6!? (against Van Wely, Antwerp 1997). However, in my opinion, 13 g4! is more timely, nipping in the bid Black's counterattack. In a different situation it can, of course, be more advantageous to manage without ...h7-h5, retaining the h5-square for the knight.

13 c5 g5 14 a4

The aforementioned Shirov-Kasparov game went 14 cxd6 cxd6 15 a4 ♘g6 (15...♖f6!?) 16 ♘b5 a6 17 ♘a3 ♘f6 18 ♘c4 g4 19 ♕b3 g3 20 hxg3 (20 ♗b6 ♕e7 21 ♔h1! is better, but not 21 ♕b4? ♘xd5! 22 exd5 ♕h4 23 h3 ♗xh3! etc.) 20...fxg3 21 ♗xg3 h4 22 ♗h2 ♘h5 (22...♗h6!?) 23 ♕b6 ♕g5 and ...♘g3! with good play for Black.

Later Viktor Lvovich switched to 14 cxd6 cxd6 (14...♘xd6 15 ♘d3 Korchnoi-Relange, Cannes 1996) 15 ♔h1!? ♘g6 16 ♖c1 ♗d7 (16...♗h6 17 ♘b5! a6 18 ♘a7 ♗d7 19 ♕b3 etc.) 17 a4 ♗h6 with a double-edged struggle (Korchnoi-J.Polgar, Vienna 1996).

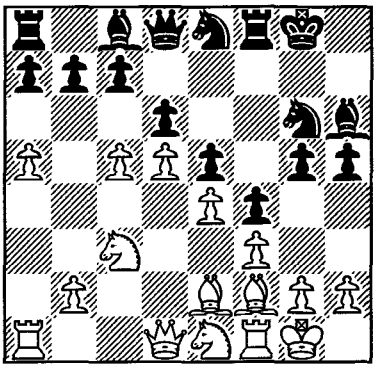
There is also another plan – 14 ♖c1 dxc5 15 ♗xc5 ♖f6 16 ♕b3 ♔h7 17 ♘d3 ♖g6 18 ♘b5! a6 19 ♘a7 ♖xa7?! (following in the footsteps of Hulak!) 20 ♗xa7 b6 21 ♖c2 (21 ♘b4!? Khuzman) 21...♗d7 22 ♖fc1 ♘c8 23 ♗b8 ♘cd6 24 ♗xc7 ♘xc7 25 ♖xc7 ♘b5 26 ♖b7 and it is doubtful whether Black has sufficient compensation for the exchange and a

pawn (Korchnoi-G.Hernandez, 1st match-game, Merida 1996).

14...♘g6 (14...♖f6!? and ...♖g6, Korchnoi-J.Polgar, Monaco blindfold 1994) **15 a5 ♗h6!?**

Clearing the g-file. In addition, after ...g5-g4(-g3) this 'bad' bishop may find work for itself – say, ...♗g5-h4 etc.

After the insipid 15...♖f7?! 16 cxd6 cxd6 the plan with 17 ♘b5! is even more unpleasant: 17...a6 18 ♘c3 ♘f6 19 ♘a4 (O'Kelly-Ghitescu, Sandefjord 1975), because of which the entire variation with 9...♘e8 was rejected. 15...dxc5 is also insufficient: 16 ♗xc5 ♘d6 17 ♘d3 ♖f7 18 a6 b6 19 ♗xd6!... 1-0 (Korchnoi-Nemet, Switzerland 1994).



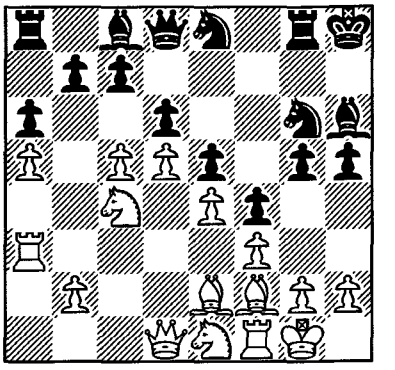
16 ♘b5!?

A novelty. Against me in Debrecen, Korchnoi chose 16 b4 ♔h7 17 cxd6 (17 a6!?) 17...cxd6 18 ♘b5, and in a complicated struggle after 18...g4 (if 18...a6 19 ♘a3 ♘f6, then 20 ♖c1! is strong) 19 fxg4 hxg4 20 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 21 ♕xg4 ♘f6 22 ♕f3 (22 ♕f5!? ♘xd5 23 ♕e6) 22...♕d7! 23 ♘xa7! ♘g4 24 b5! ♘xf2 (24...♘e3? 25 b6!) 25 ♕xf2 f3! 26 ♘xf3 ♕g4 27 b6 ♕xe4 28 ♖fe1 ♕xd5 29 ♕c2 ♖ae8 Black experienced serious problems, but gained a draw on the 44th move.

16...a6 (forced: give up the a7-pawn?!) **17 ♘a3 ♔h8**

With the intention of ...♖g8. 17...♖f7 18 ♘c4 ♖g7 (18...dxc5 19 ♘d3!) 19 ♖a3 etc. was no better for Black.

18 ♘c4 (if 18 cxd6, in the hope of 18...cxd6 19 ♘c4, then 18...♘xd6! with an unclear game) **18...♖g8 19 ♖a3**



19...♘f6

'Up to here Shirov did not have to think very much – he was repeating the play of Kasparov, who had already employed this variation several times. Now he makes a mistake, prematurely activating his knight. Correct was either 19...♘f8, or 19...dxc5 20 ♗xc5 ♘d6 – this is why I subsequently began exchanging on d6 earlier!' (Korchnoi)

But, in my opinion, 19...♘f8 is too passive, since after 20 cxd6 cxd6 (20...♘xd6? 21 ♘xe5) it is difficult for Black to create threats on the kingside. And if 19...dxc5!? there is 20 ♘d3!? ♘d6 21 ♘xc5, when Black has to play extremely inventively in search of counter-chances: 21...g4 22 ♘xd6 cxd6 23 ♘e6 ♗xe6 24 dxe6 g3 25 ♗b6 gxh2+ 26 ♔h1 ♕e7 27 ♖d3 ♘h4 28 ♖f2 ♖ac8! 29 ♗f1 ♗f8 30 ♖c2 ♖xc2 31 ♕xc2 ♕xe6 32 ♗f2 ♗e7 etc.

20 cxd6 cxd6 21 ♘b6?!

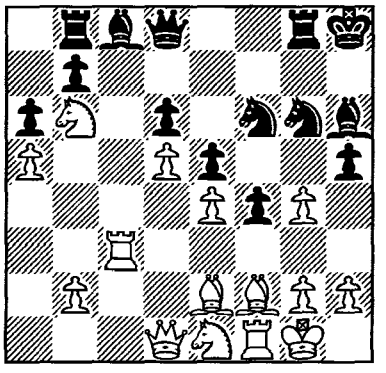
Korchnoi attaches a question mark to this move, lamenting: 'It is difficult being a pioneer.' Indeed, after 21 ♕b3 g4 (21...♕e7 22 ♕b4!) 22 ♕b6, recommended by him and Shirov, White would have retained the advantage, although just how great an advantage is another question: 22...♕xb6 23 ♘xb6 ♖b8 24 ♔h1 ♗g5 25 ♖c3 ♗h4 26 ♘d3 gxf3 27 gxf3 ♗h3 28 ♖g1 ♖g7.

21...♖b8 22 ♖c3

If 22 ♕c2 g4 23 ♖c3 (23 fxg4 hxg4 Shirov), then 23...g3! 24 hxg3 fxg3 25 ♗xg3 h4 26 ♗h(f)2 ♘h5 with excellent play for the pawn. Perhaps the dangerous bishop should have been exchanged immediately – 22 ♘xc8, although after 22...♖xc8 23 ♔h1 g4 24 ♗b6 ♕d7 Black's chances are not worse.

22...g4! 23 fxg4

'Played after lengthy reflection. Black was threatening ...g4-g3, and in some cases also the capture on f3.' (Korchnoi). For example: 23 ♔h1 (Shirov) 23...g3 24 ♗g1 gxh2 25 ♗f2! h4! and ...♘h5 with the invasion of the knight at g3.



23...♘xe4!

If 23...hxg4 White was intending 24 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 25 ♗xg4 ♖xc3 26 bxc3, and since 26...♘xg4? 27 ♕xg4 ♕xa5 28 ♕h3! is bad for Black, 'the light-squared bishop becomes very strong': 26...♘xe4 27 ♗b6 ♕f6 28 ♗e6, or 26...♕xa5 27 ♗e6 ♖g7 28 ♕d3 ♖c7 29 c4 etc.

Korchnoi also thought that 23...♗xg4 was not dangerous for him – in this way Black avoids the exchange of his bishop for the knight and, exploiting his superiority in force on the kingside, he could have tried to create pressure along the g-file and on the weak e4-pawn. But after 24 h3 White does indeed have quite a good position.

24 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 25 ♘xc8 ♕xc8

Shirov could have eliminated one of the opponent's powerful bishops – 25...♘xf2 26 ♖xf2 ♕xc8. Here Korchnoi considers 27 g5 ♗xg5 28 ♗xh5 (28 ♗xa6 f3!) 28...♕c5 29 ♗xg6 ♖xg6 30 ♕c2 ♕xc2 31 ♖xc2 ♖g8 with somewhat the better endgame for Black: 'his pawn formation is highly promising'.

27 gxh5 is evidently better – in Korchnoi's opinion, after 27...♘h4 or 27...♘e7 Black's position looks too active', but in my view, after both 27...♘h4 28 ♘f3 ♘f5 29 ♕b1 ♘e3 30 ♘h4 ♖g7 31 ♘g6+ ♔g8 32 h3 ♖c7 33 ♕e4, and 27...♘e7 28 ♗f3 or 28 ♘c2 it is not easy for him to breach the blockade on the light squares and the position is unclear.

26 ♗b6!

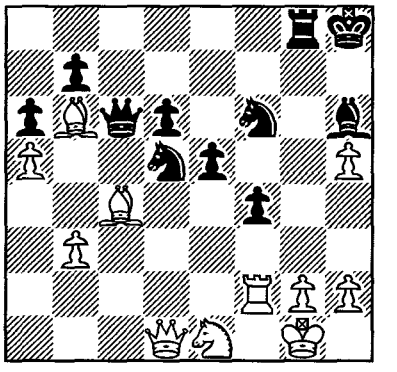
'Another difficult move. White must preserve his bishops – they will come in useful!' (Korchnoi)

26...♘e7! (avoiding the dangerous activation of the light-squared bishop in the event of 26...hxg4?! 27 ♗xg4 or 26...h4?! 27 ♗d3 ♘f6(g5) 28 ♗f5) **27 gxh5 ♘f6 28 b3!**

'This is Korchnoi's "clumsy" style at its very best.' (Larsen). It was weak to play 28 ♗f3 ♕f5! with the threat of ...e5-e4 (Knaak), while if 29 ♕c2, then 29...♕xc2 (29...e4? 30 ♗d4) 30 ♘xc2 ♘exd5.

28...♘exd5 29 ♗c4 ♕c6 30 ♖f2

'The position is an unusual one. Black's central pawns must not be underestimated – in any ending he will have the advantage. Bent Larsen, who very much liked this game, assessed this position as won for White. Apparently he simply mistook the desirable for the actual...' (Korchnoi)

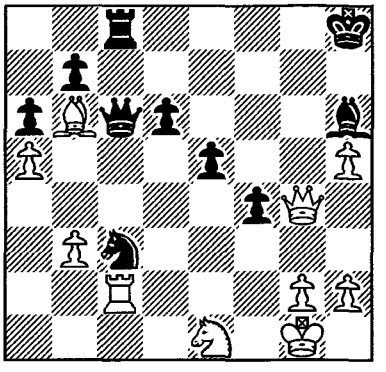


30...♖c8?

A fundamental mistake in a very complicated position. The cool-headed 30...♖f8! (Shirov) would have enabled Black, at the minimum, to maintain the balance: 31 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 32 ♖c2 (it is bad to play 32 ♕g4?! ♘xb6 33 axb6 d5, or, as shown by Korchnoi, 32 ♖d2?! ♘e3 33 ♗xe3 fxe3 34 ♖xd6 e2 35 ♖xh6+ ♕xh6 36 ♕xe2 ♕f4) 32...♕b5 33 ♘f3 (not 33 ♕g4? ♘e3 or 33 ♕d3?! ♕xd3 34 ♘xd3 e4) 33...♕xb3 (33...♖e8!? 34 ♘h4!) 34 ♖d2 ♕xd1+ 35 ♖xd1 ♘xb6 36 ♖xd6 ♗g7 37 axb6 (37 ♖xb6? e4) with a drawn ending.

Korchnoi continues 37...a5 38 ♖d7 ♖b8 39 h6 ♗xh6 40 ♘xe5 with equality, or 37...e4 38 ♘g5 e3 39 ♔f1 ♖c8, and here 'the simplest way to draw is 40 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 41 ♘f7+.' But after 41...♔h7! 42 ♘xd8 ♗d4 and ...♗xb6 it is not clear whether White can manage to neutralise Black's two passed pawns – 'a' and 'e'. In my opinion, it is simpler to play 40 g3 f3 41 ♘xf3 ♖c2 42 ♔g1, or 40 ♖d7 ♖c1+ 41 ♔e2 ♖c2+ 42 ♔f3 ♖f2+ 43 ♔e4 ♗f6 44 ♘f7+ ♔g8 45 ♘h6+ ♔h8 46 ♘f7+ with perpetual check.

31 ♗xd5 ♘xd5 (31...♕xd5 32 ♖d2 was no better) **32 ♖c2 ♘c3 33 ♕g4!**



Material is equal, but White unexpectedly launches an attack, and Black loses because of the fatal pin on his knight.

33...♗f8

If 33...♕e8 White would have won by 34 ♕h3 ♕c6 35 ♕e6 or 35 ♘f3 and ♘h4. Korchnoi considered the best defence to be 33...♖g8 34 ♕e6 ♗f8 (34...♗g7? 35 h6), although after 35 h6! ♕e4 36 ♔f1 White would also have won.

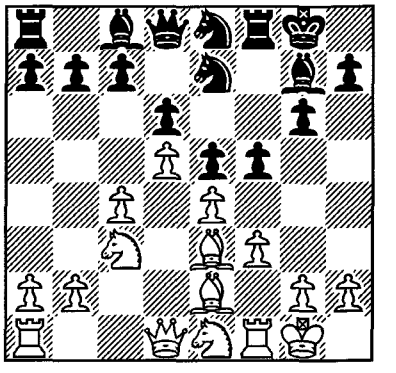
34 ♘d3 ♕e8 35 ♘b4! (with the decisive threat of ♘d5) **35...d5 36 ♘xd5 ♗c5+ 37 ♗xc5 ♖xc5** (37...♘xd5 38 ♗f8!) **38 h6 ♕f8 39 ♖xc3 1-0**

A complicated, dynamic, typically King's Indian struggle, in which the young talent failed to withstand the onslaught of the 63-year-old veteran.

That same year, taking part in the Dutch Team Championship, Korchnoi also improved White's play in another branch of this sharp variation of the King's Indian. In his game with Nijboer he was able to carry out the same destructive piece sacrifice with the aim of creating a pawn avalanche, as once made previously by Tal (*Volume 2, Game No.133*) and Spassky (*Volume 3, Game No.77*).

Game 41
V.Korchnoi-F.Nijboer
Netherlands 1993
King's Indian Defence E98

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 ♘f3 e5 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 d5 ♘e7 9 ♘e1 ♘e8 (9...♘d7 is nevertheless more solid – *Game No.39*) **10 ♗e3 f5 11 f3**



11...c5?!

Instead of the usual 11...f4 12 ♗f2 g5 13 c5 (*Game No.40*) Black wants first to safeguard himself on the queenside, and only then begin his counterattack on the kingside. However, both practice, and my own King's Indian experience, suggest that usually this move is insufficient: Black loses time, and all the same he is unable to block the flank completely.

12 ♘d3!

Not long before this, against the same opponent in Wijk aan Zee (1993), Korchnoi had chosen 12 dxc6 bxc6 13 ♕d2 (13 c5?! d5) 13...♗e6 14 ♖d1 ♕c7 15 f4, and after 15...exf4 16 ♗xf4 fxe4 17 ♘xe4 (17 c5? ♘d5) 17...♕b6+ 18 ♗e3 ♖xf1+ 19 ♔xf1 ♕xb2 20 ♕xb2 ♗xb2 21 ♘xd6 Black could have gained equal chances by 21...♗e5! But Nijboer went wrong, got into time-trouble, and in the end he lost.

The knight move is stronger: White gradually prepares the piece sacrifice on c5, exploiting the remoteness of both black knights from the defence of this point.

12...f4 13 ♗f2 h5?!

Korchnoi is terribly critical of this move, regarding it as the reason for Black's crushing defeat in this game, and adding: 'The trouble is that this move was recommended in a similar position by the world champion Kasparov!'

However, I recommended ...h7-h5 in a different position (cf. the note to Black's 12th move in *Game No.40*). In such complicated, double-edged set-ups all the distinctions must be keenly felt. Here I would have preferred 13...g5 – every tempo is precious to Black, and now 14 g4 is no longer dangerous for him, since he has succeeded in 'freezing' the queenside. And for White, if he is aiming for the piece sacrifice, playing g2-g4 is inconvenient for him. There could have followed 14 b4 b6 15 a4 a5 16 bxc5 bxc5 17 ♖b1 ♘g6, and in the variations with 18 ♘xc5, instead of the unnecessary move ...h7-h5 Black has made the far more useful ...♘g6.

It is such nuances that comprise the difference in the understanding of this or that position. Nijboer thought that he had erected a fortress, but in fact this proves to be an illusion.

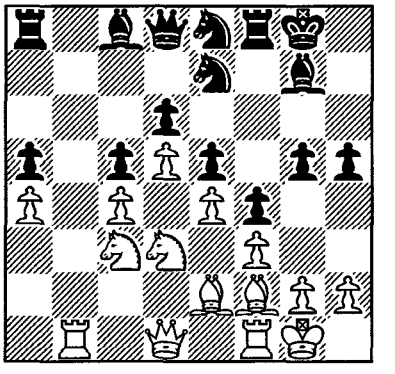
14 b4 (it is essential to open the b-file)

14...b6 15 a4 a5 16 bxc5 bxc5

'After 16...dxc5 Black is left with two pawn weaknesses – at b6 and e5, but on the other hand he obtains a good square for his knight – d6. It is true that ....dxc5 might not have affected the course of the present game.' (Korchnoi)

17 ♖b1 g5

Launching a counter-offensive, in a seemingly solid position. But Korchnoi points out that, out of his first 17 moves, Black has made 11 with his pawns and he has advanced all eight of them! Whereas his pieces are all huddled together on the 7th and 8th ranks...



18 ♘xc5!

'This came as a surprise to my opponent, as, however, did many of my other moves in this game,' Korchnoi remarks with satisfaction. 'The unhurried 18 ♕b3 was possible, also with a solid advantage to White.' And if 18...♘g6, then 19 ♕b6. But the knight sacrifice is far more effective!

18...dxc5 19 ♗xc5 ♘g6?!

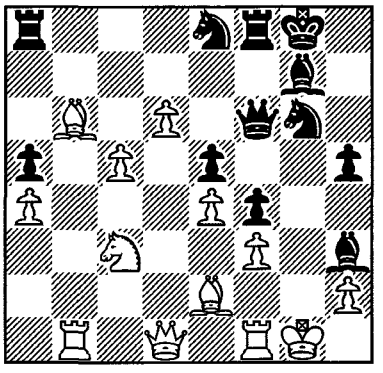
In Korchnoi's opinion, '19...♖f6 was correct, defending the b6-square, and intending to post the rook at g6 and the bishop at f8. After 20 ♕b3 ♗f8 21 ♗f2 g4 22 c5 ♔h7 23 d6 White has excellent compensation for the sacrificed piece, but there is still a serious battle in prospect.'

However, 21 ♗b6! is stronger, forcing 21...♖xb6 (otherwise 22 c5!) 22 ♕xb6 ♕xb6+ 23 ♖xb6, and after 23...♘f5 (23...♘xd5?! 24 ♘xd5 and wins) 24 ♖g6+ ♘fg7 25 ♖xg5 White has a rook and three pawns for two minor pieces and every chance of winning. What can Black do? If 20...♘g6 or 20...♘d6 there also follows 21 ♗b6 and c4-c5, while if 20...♘c7, then 21 d6! There only remains 20...♖aa6, but then too after 21 ♗f2 g4 22 c5 things are difficult for Black. However, after the move in the game he loses even more quickly.

20 ♗b6! (White does not need to win the exchange: the main thing is to advance his pawn avalanche) **20...♕f6 21 c5 g4 22 d6!** (avoiding being diverted by 22 fxg4) **22...gxf3** (22...♗e6 23 d7) **23 gxf3**

An exchange sacrifice, demonstrating the power of the white pawns! The simple 23 ♗xf3!? ♖f7 24 ♕d5 was also good.

23...♗h3



24 ♔h1! ♗xf1 25 ♗xf1 ♕e6?!

25...♘xd6, connecting the rooks, was slightly more tenacious. True, Black's position remains lost both after 26 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 27 cxd6 ♗f6 28 ♘d5 ♗d8 29 ♘c7 ♖b8 30 ♗b5 and ♗xa5, and after 26 cxd6! – the passed pawn is too strong.

26 d7 ♘f6 (26...♘d6 27 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 28 cxd6 was hopeless, as was the 'comparatively best' 26...♗f6 27 ♕d5 ♕xd5 28 ♘xd5 – Korchnoi) **27 d8♕ ♖fxd8 28 ♗xd8 ♘d7 29 ♗g5 ♖c8**

Or 29...♘xc5 30 ♘d5 ♖a7 31 ♖b6 ♕f7 (31...♕e8 32 ♗b5) 32 ♗c4 ♔h8 33 ♕g1 with decisive threats.

30 ♕d5 ♘gf8

After 30...♕xd5 31 exd5 ♖xc5 32 ♘e4 (Korchnoi) or 30...♘xc5 31 ♖b6! ♕xd5 32 exd5 ♘f8 (32...♔f7 33 ♗h3) 33 ♖c6 ♖xc6 34 dxc6 the passed pawn is irresistible.

31 ♗e7 ♘xc5? (blundering a piece, but 31...♔h8 32 ♗xf8 ♘xf8 33 ♖b5 was also bad for Black) **32 ♗h3 ♕xd5 33 ♘xd5 1-0**

If 33...♖c6 34 ♖c1.

Nevertheless, Korchnoi considers the King's Indian Defence to be 'quite a flexible opening', only in the Classical Variation he does not approve of 7...♘c6: 'It is surprising that so many top players choose the least flexible move, leading to sharp play with attacks on opposite sides. A quiet, strategic battle results after 7...♘bd7, 7...♘a6 or 7...exd4.'

Well, we will see what the consequences of the 'quiet' 7...♘bd7 can be (*Game No.47*). As fifty years of practice have shown, the move 7...♘c6 is not really so 'inflexible', and Korchnoi's categorical evaluation is a reflection more of his natural maximalism. Incidentally, Eduard Gufeld, a well-known advocate of the King's Indian Defence, stated categorically that, on the contrary, in all three of its main variations (with 3 g3, 5 f3 and 5 ♘f3, ♗e2 and 0-0) Black should develop his queen's knight only at c6, since this is the sole way of gaining sufficient counterplay!

Strict Examiner

During his long chess career, Korchnoi, as he himself has said, has had to meet with representatives of at least six generations at the board. Moreover, against the young he has always played with some kind of special fervour, in a very interesting creative manner. And even grandmasters among the top ten in the world have very often been unable to find an effective antidote to his deep and unusual ideas.

His forte still remained new, unexpected and energetic continuations, sharply changing the situation on the board. Often his opponents were simply unable to find their bearings, although traditionally it is considered that the young brain should react more quickly to any changes. But even in his advancing years Korchnoi has not lost his freshness of perception. Sudden changes of scene do not frighten him – he himself aims for them! Even now an uneven chess tempo is his natural element! Plus, as has already been mentioned, exceptionally fine technique and positional understanding. Therefore his games with young players, keeping in mind their strength and potential, are especially important and instructive.

I will begin with the double-round tournament of eight grandmasters in Tilburg (1989), a memorable one for me. The oldest contestant was the 58-year-old Viktor Korchnoi, and the youngest – the 20-year-old Ukrainian grandmaster Vasily Ivanchuk, who was then already rated No.3 in the world. Ivanchuk's enormous talent was obvious: Botvinnik even predicted victory for him in Tilburg, despite the participation of the world champion! Initially Vasily justified these hopes: at the start, like Korchnoi and I, he scored 3 out of 4, gaining a draw with Black against Korchnoi. In the 5th round I managed to beat Ivanchuk – but Korchnoi also won his game! Nevertheless, by gaining five successive wins, I pulled away from my rival, and in the second half of the tournament there was only a fight for 2nd place.

After his loss to me, Ivanchuk tried desperately but unsuccessfully to improve his tournament position. And his game from the second half with Korchnoi was virtually his last chance of finishing in the first three. It should be said that Vasily has always been distinguished by his serious approach to the game: he could play anything at all, but he tried to choose openings specially for his particular opponents. However, here he met his match!

Game 42

V.Ivanchuk-V.Korchnoi

Tilburg 1989

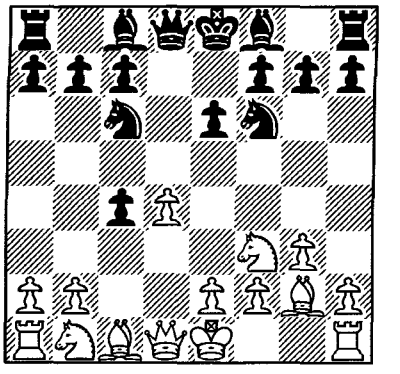
Catalan Opening E04

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3

Not Ivanchuk's main weapon. Possibly he chose the Catalan under the influence of the Kasparov-Korchnoi match (1983), where Black lost ½-2½ in this opening. If Vasily was hoping that his opponent would still have an unpleasant aftertaste, this psychological ploy proved unjustified.

3...d5 4 ♗g2 dxc4 5 ♘f3 (after the quiet 5 ♕a4+ ♘bd7 White regains the pawn, but usually loses his opening initiative) **5...♘c6!?**

A rare variation at that time – although after this game it gained momentum! 5...a6 used to be very popular, while in his match with me Korchnoi tried 5...c5, and 5...♗d7, and 5...♘bd7.



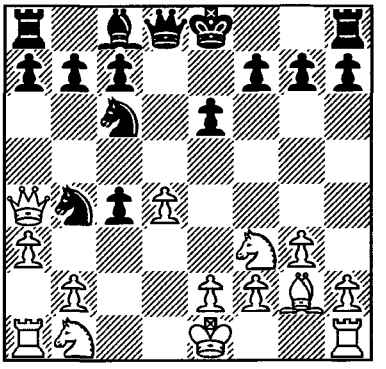
6 ♕a4 (6 0-0 a6 or 6...♖b8 Kir.Georgiev-Korchnoi, Biel 1992) **6...♗b4+ 7 ♗d2 ♘d5** (7...♗d6!? 8 0-0 0-0 9 ♕xc4 e5 Karpov-Kramnik, Wijk aan Zee 1998) **8 ♗xb4**

8 ♕b5 is more rarely played, in order after 8...0-0 to regain the pawn – 9 ♕xc4, and after 8...♗xd2+ 9 ♘bxd2 c3 10 bxc3 ♘xc3 11 ♕d3 ♘d5 12 0-0 0-0 followed by e2-e4 to obtain quite good compensation for it.

8...♘dxb4 9 a3

Theory considers 9 0-0 ♖b8 10 ♘c3 a6 11

♘e5 to be more prudent, but some players, and they include Ivanchuk, do not seek safety in chess!' (Korchnoi)



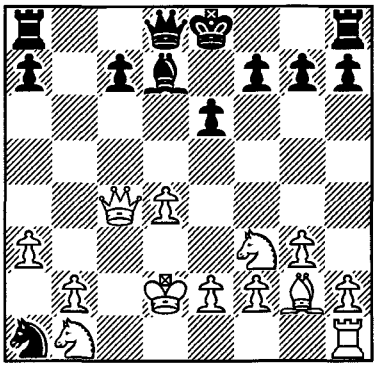
9...b5! 10 ♕xb5

In the event of 10 ♕d1 ♘d5 Black has a perfectly sound position with an extra pawn: 11 e4 (11 a4 b4) 11...♘b6 12 ♘c3 a6 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♕d2 ♗b7 15 ♖ad1 ♕e7 16 h4 ♖ad8 (Karpov-Kramnik, Monaco blindfold 1999).

10...♘c2+ 11 ♔d2

After the newly fashionable 11 ♔f1 ♗d7! 12 ♖a2 ♘6xd4 13 ♕c5 ♕e7 or 13...♘f5!? (Karpov-Van Wely, 1st matchgame, Dubai rapidplay 2002), it is also hard for White to count on an advantage.

11...♘xa1 (since the mid-1990s 11...♗d7!? 12 ♔xc2 ♘xd4+ 13 ♘xd4 ♗xb5 14 ♘xb5 ♖b8 has also occurred, with a queen for three pieces and a very complicated game) **12 ♕xc6+ ♗d7 13 ♕xc4**



13...c5!

An excellent novelty, opening up a whole new line in the theory of the Catalan. The old game Aizenshtadt-Taimanov (Leningrad 1949) went 13...♖b8 14 b4 c5 15 ♘c3 cxd4 16 ♘e4 ♗b5 17 ♕a2 d3! with the initiative for Black (18 ♖xa1 ♖c8!), but Taimanov suggested 15 ♕c3! cxb4 16 axb4 a5 17 ♕xa1 axb4 18 ♖c1, when White's two knights outweigh the rook, despite the strong passed b-pawn. Since that time the variation 5...♘c6 had been shelved.

Korchnoi gives an interesting explanation for the origin of the move 13...c5: 'One of the greatest experts on the Catalan Opening for White in the 1970s and 1980s was grandmaster Genna Sosonko. Once I noticed that with Black he was aiming to obtain this position. He had thought up something! But what? His opponents avoided the critical position. I spent several hours at home looking at this variation and found an improvement for Black!'

14 ♕a2

Essentially the only move. The alternatives are bad for White: 14 ♘c3? ♕b6! (this move, given by Korchnoi in *Informator*, is more aggressive than 14...cxd4 15 ♘xd4 ♖c8 16 ♕d3 e5), or 14 ♘e5? ♖c8 15 d5 ♖b8!

14...♕a5+ 15 b4?

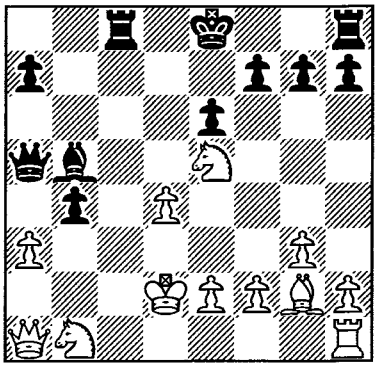
In an unfamiliar and suddenly sharpened situation, White makes a serious mistake. Apparently the opponent's novelty had left Ivanchuk in a state of shock.

Immediately afterwards Korchnoi recommended 15 ♘c3 cxd4 16 ♘xd4 ♖d8 17 ♖xa1! (17 e3 e5 18 b4 ♕a6 or my suggestion – 18...♕b6 19 ♘d5 ♗e6!) 17...e5 18 b4 ♕b6 19 ♘c2, and this became the main line of the entire variation. After 19...♕xf2 White can play 20 ♘e3 ♗e6+ 21 ♘cd5 0-0 22 ♕c4 ♗xd5 23 ♗xd5 ♕xh2... ½-½ (Bareev-Adams, Dortmund 2000), or 20 ♗d5 0-0 21 ♕c4 ♗e6 22 ♘e3 ♕xh2 23 ♕h4 ♕xh4 24 gxh4 f5 25 ♔c2 (25 ♔e1!?) 25...♔f7 26 ♖d1 f4 27 ♘c4 ½-½ (Kasparov-Adams, Wijk aan Zee 2001).

I played Adams in the last round, and I was

a point ahead of Anand and Kramnik. My colleagues smiled: is this really the way to play the opening, when you only need a draw? However, I sensed that White had some advantage and I wanted to play this complicated position. But then I realised that I had committed an inaccuracy and I offered a draw... Exactly a year later, on the same stage, instead of 26 ♖d1 there followed 26 ♖g1! ♖d7 (26...g6!? Ftacnik) 27 ♗xe6+ ♔xe6 28 ♘a4 ♔f6 29 ♘c5 ♖d4? 30 ♘xf5!... 1-0 (Kasimdzhanov-Van Wely, Wijk aan Zee 2002). Of course, 29...♖c8 was essential, retaining considerable defensive resources.

15...cxb4 16 ♕xa1 ♖c8 17 ♘e5 (17 ♖c1?! ♖xc1 18 ♔xc1 0-0 with the threat of ...♖c8+ etc.) **17...♗b5**

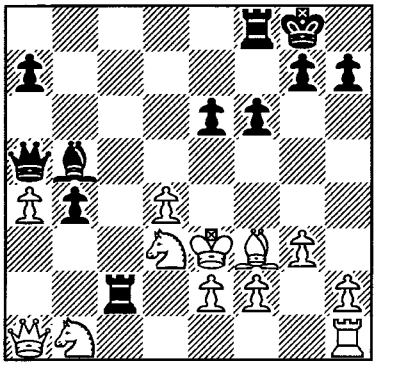


18 ♔e3

A difficult choice in an indifferent position. 'After the game, analysts stated that 18 a4 was more tenacious, when White still has saving chances. Later games did not confirm this opinion.' (Korchnoi)

Indeed, after 18...0-0 the white king is in a terrible position all the same: after 19 ♘d3 both 19...♗xd3 20 ♔xd3 e5! and the preparatory 19...b3+! are strong, while if 19 ♕b2 (Korchnoi), then 19...♕xa4 20 ♗e4 ♖fd8 with an attack. Or 19 ♗e4 f6! 20 ♘d3 (20 ♘f3 b3+ etc.) 20...f5 21 ♗f3 b3+ 22 ♘c3 ♗xd3 and ...♕b4... 0-1 (Kaidanov-Goldin, Philadelphia 1998).

18...♖c2 (the decisive invasion) **19 ♗f3 0-0 20 a4 f6 21 ♘d3**



21...♗c4

Threatening ...♖a2. From the computer's point of view, 21...♗xd3 22 ♔xd3 ♕c7 23 ♔e3 ♕c4 24 ♖d1 ♖a2 wins more simply, but a human goes his own way.

22 ♘d2 ♕g5+?!

Black could have immediately concluded matters by 22...♗xd3 23 exd3 (23 ♔xd3 ♖c3+ 24 ♔e4 ♕f5 mate) 23...♕g5+ (Korchnoi) 24 ♔e4 f5+ 25 ♔e5 f4+ 26 ♔xe6 ♖e8+ 27 ♔d7 ♕d8 mate. However, he is still winning.

23 ♘f4 e5 (23...♖c3+!? Korchnoi) **24 ♘xc4 exf4+ 25 gxf4 ♕f5! 26 ♘d6** (26 ♕b1 ♖e8+ or 26 ♗e4 ♖c3+ etc. was no better) **26...♕e6+ 0-1**

White resigns: 27 ♗e4 (otherwise ...♕b3+) 27...♖c3+ and ...♕xd6.

Thanks to this win, Viktor Lvovich firmly established himself in 2nd place – and he maintained it to the end of the tournament: 1. Kasparov – 12 out of 14; 2. Korchnoi – 8½; 3. Sax – 7; 4-5. Ivanchuk and Ljubojevic – 6½, etc.

The Interzonal tournament of the next cycle, held for the first time on the Swiss system (Manila, summer 1990), was marked by the resolute emergence into the arena of the generation of 20-year-olds, although some experienced fighters also qualified for the Candidates: 1-2. Gelfand and Ivanchuk – 9 out of 13; 3-4. Anand and Short – 8½; 5-11. Sax,

Korchnoi, Hübner, Nikolic, Yudasin, Dolmatov and Dreev – 8, etc. Together with Timman, Speelman and Yusupov (finalist and semi-finalists in the previous cycle) they made up seven match pairs, and then the seven winners were joined by Karpov (as participant in the 1990 world championship match) and so on.

In the spring, Korchnoi warmed up for the Interzonal with two four-player grandmaster tournaments – a triple-round event in Beersheva and a double-round event in Rotterdam. In both he finished first and, as later in Manila, he was undefeated throughout. It is amusing that the following fine game with the 26-year-old Israeli grandmaster Alon Greenfeld, played at the start in Beersheva, turned out to be the only one in the tournament to end decisively!

Game 43
V.Korchnoi-A.Greenfeld
Beersheva 1990
English Opening A30

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 c5 3 ♘f3 e6 4 g3 b6 5 ♗g2 ♗b7 6 0-0 ♗e7

After 6...a6 7 b3 d6 Korchnoi also played d2-d4, and after ...cxd4 he replied either ♕xd4 – against S.Garcia (Moscow 1975), or ♘xd4 – against Hjartarson (Reykjavik 1988) and Ivanchuk (Tilburg 1989).

7 b3

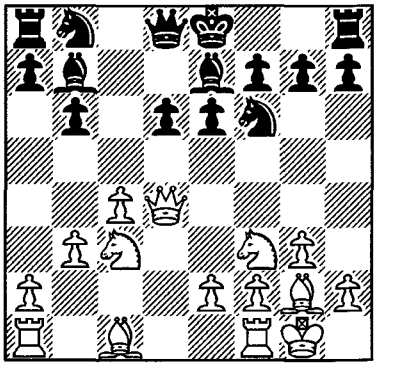
In order later, after d2-d4 and ...cxd4, to possibly recapture on d4 with the knight. After the direct 7 d4 cxd4 8 ♕xd4 in the old days Korchnoi many times faced 8...♘c6 or 8...0-0 and ...♘c6 (*Game No.16*), and in the 'hedgehog' era – 8...d6 followed by ...♘bd7.

7...d6

7...d5 8 cxd5 ♘xd5 is good for Black, with equality. But, as Korchnoi aptly observed, hedgehog lovers do not want an equal game.

8 d4 (8 ♗b2 0-0 9 e3 a6 10 d4 cxd4 11 ♘xd4 is slower, Korchnoi-Portisch, 9th matchgame, Bad Kissingen 1983) **8...cxd4 9 ♕xd4**

After 9 ♘xd4 ♗xg2 10 ♔xg2 ♕c7 11 e4 a6 12 ♗b2 ♕b7 13 ♖e1 0-0 Black has fewer problems (Korchnoi-Polugayevsky, Biel 1986).



Korchnoi has already commented on 'hedgehog' positions of this type (cf. *Game No.16*). And in the introduction to this game he adds: 'To some extent hedgehog lovers are right. They are convinced that the main thing in chess is not material, and not space, but the coordination and activity of the pieces – and this coordination can be achieved even in restricted space. And such play came into fashion. Whereas earlier it was considered extremely undesirable to concede the centre, now dozens of players, literally from the first moves, concede the centre and begin erecting their defences along the 6th rank. I think that the reader will understand why for me, brought up with an orthodox understanding of chess, the given game is very precious.'

9...♘bd7?!

Not the most accurate move order, which is also the case with 9...a6?! 10 ♗a3! (preventing ...♘bd7) 10...0-0 11 ♖fd1 with pressure for White (Korchnoi-A.Greenfeld, Beersheva 1988). But nowadays everyone knows that 9...0-0! is correct, for example: 10 ♗b2 (if 10 ♗a3, then 10...♘a6!) 10...a6 11 ♖fd1 ♘bd7 12 ♕d2 ♕c7 13 ♘d4 ♗xg2 14 ♔xg2 ♕b7+ 15 f3 ♘e5!... ½-½ (Korchnoi-Polugayevsky, 11th matchgame, Buenos Aires 1980).

10 ♘b5!

Korchnoi's novelty, which he first em-

ployed in the 6th game of his Candidates match with Hjartarson (Saint John 1988). By attacking the d6-pawn, he causes a certain disharmony in the opponent's ranks.

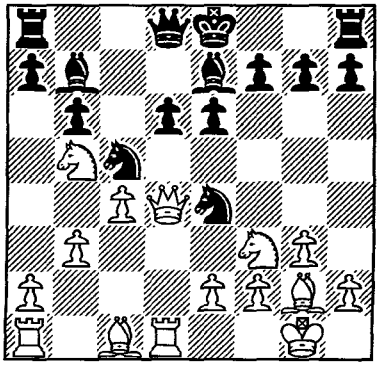
10...♘c5

If 10...♘e4? White was intending 11 ♕xg7 ♗f6 12 ♕h6 ♗xa1 13 ♘g5! with a powerful attack. However, after 10...d5!? 11 cxd5 ♗xd5 12 ♕f4 0-0 13 ♗b2 a6 14 ♘c3 he would have had only a comparatively slight advantage.

11 ♖d1 ♘fe4?!

An unsuccessful piece of preparation by Greenfeld. He had already played this against Andersson (Thessaloniki Olympiad 1988) and lost, but now he had apparently found some improvement.

11...d5 was now essential, following the example of the aforementioned source game Korchnoi-Hjartarson, which was brilliantly won by the veteran: 12 cxd5 exd5 (Black also does not equalise fully after 12...♘xd5 13 e4 or 12...♗xd5 13 ♕f4) 13 ♗h3!? 0-0 14 ♗b2 a6 15 ♘c3 ♖e8 16 ♖ac1 ♘e6? 17 ♗xe6! fxe6 18 ♘a4 b5 19 ♘c5 ♗c8 20 ♘e5 with a complete bind. The young Icelandic grandmaster clearly underestimated his opponent's strategic idea.



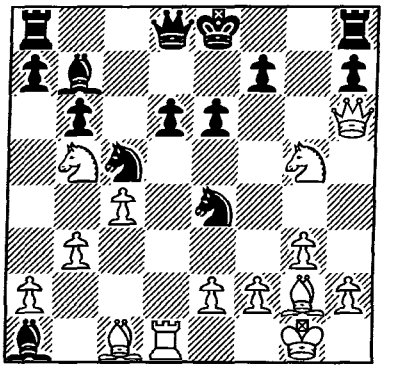
12 ♕xg7!

Another brilliant novelty! White gives up a rook and then begins an attack with his knights in the spirit of Morphy or Chigorin.

The Andersson-Greenfeld game went 12 b4 ♗f6 13 ♕e3 ♗xa1 14 bxc5 bxc5 15 ♘g5! ♗d4 16 ♘xd4 (16 ♕f4! ♕xg5 17 ♘xd6+ is even better) 16...cxd4 17 ♖xd4 ♘c5 18 ♗xb7 ♘xb7 19 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 20 ♕f3+ ♔g8 21 ♕xb7 ♖b8 22 ♕e4... 1-0. On this occasion Greenfeld was apparently intending to try 14...0-0 or 12...a6, but Korchnoi forestalled him, demonstrating his own, highly impressive interpretation of the variation.

12...♗f6 13 ♕h6 ♗xa1 14 ♘g5!

A mind-boggling position, which to play for the first time is difficult as White (he is, after all, a rook down) and especially as Black: he can become confused in searching for the best defence!



14...♗e5?

A seemingly natural, but incorrect move. Citing an extensive analysis by grandmaster Matthias Wahls, Korchnoi suggests that 'The only possibility of avoiding a rapid defeat is 14...♕f6!: 15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♗xe4 ♕xh6 17 ♗xh6 ♗xe4 18 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 19 ♘xe4 ♗e5 (19...♗f6? 20 ♗c1!) 20 f4 ♗b2 21 ♖b1 ♗d4+ 22 ♔g2 ♖hg8 (22...f6 23 e3! ♗xe3 24 ♗g7) 23 ♗g5+ f6 24 ♗h4 ♖g6 25 ♔f3 a5 (25...h5 26 b4! and there is no defence against the threat of e2-e3) 26 g4 – White has a clear positional advantage.'

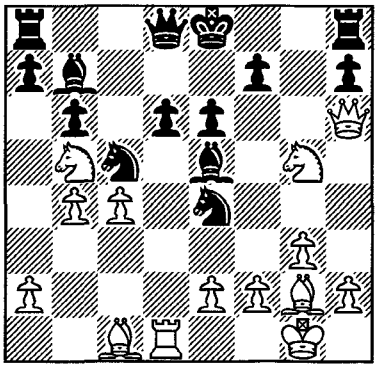
The immediate 25 b4!? ♖c8 26 ♔f3 (with the idea of 26...♖xc4? 27 e3) is perhaps even better. White has two pawns for the exchange and an obvious advantage in view of the unfortunate position of the black bishop. Therefore Black should defend with 20...♗f6 (S.Kuznetsov-Mayorov, correspondence 1994) or

21...♗f6!? 22 ♔f2 ♖hg8 with good drawing chances.

15 b4!?

It is strange that in his book *My Best Games Volume 1* (2001) Korchnoi makes no comment at all on this move (nor does Ftacnik in *Chess-Base*), although back in 1990 in *Informator* he indicated a simpler way to win – 15 ♘xe4! ♗xe4 (or 15...♘xe4 16 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 17 f4 etc.) 16 ♗g5! f6 17 f4 fxg5 18 fxe5 with an irresistible attack. I would add 16...♕d7 17 f4! (or 17 b4 ♗xg2 18 bxc5 Shchekachev-Kersten, Bad Zwesten 2003) 17...a6 18 fxe5 axb5 19 ♖xd6 ♕c7 (19...♗xg2 20 ♕f6!) 20 ♗xe4 ♘xe4 21 ♖xe6+!

In the game Petursson-Akesson (Stockholm 1991) the tempting 15 f4?! occurred, and after 15...♗f6? 16 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 17 b4 ♗xg2 18 bxc5 Black's position collapsed. However, 15...♕f6! 16 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 17 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 18 ♘xd6+ ♔e7 19 ♘xe4 ♖ad8 would have led to a roughly equal endgame.



15...♕f6

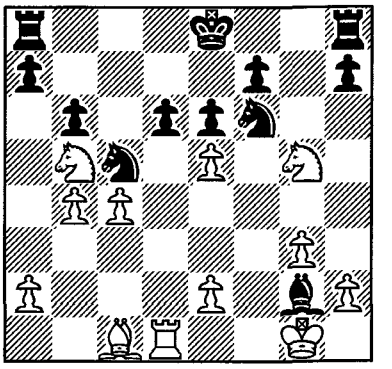
Comparatively the best chance. 15...♘c3 is weaker (as analysts have shown, other replies are also unsuitable) 16 ♘xc3! (16 bxc5 ♕f6! is not so clear) 16...♗xg2 17 bxc5 ♗xc3 (17...♕f6 18 ♕xf6 and ♘b5!) 18 ♔xg2 ♕f6 19 ♕xf6 ♗xf6 20 ♘e4 with an obvious advantage for White (Tsesarsky-A.Greenfeld, Givatayim 1997), but 19 ♕h5! dxc5 20 ♘e4 ♕g6 21 ♕f3, winning, is more efficient..

16 ♕xf6 ♘xf6 (if 16...♗xf6 there would have followed 17 bxc5 ♗xg5 18 ♗xg5 0-0 19 cxd6 with a won ending) **17 f4!**

According to Korchnoi, 17 bxc5 ♗xg2 18 f4 was also possible, but here after 18...♗d4+! 19 ♖(♘)xd4 dxc5 Black saves the game.

17...♗xg2 (17...♗a1? 18 ♘xd6+! ♔e7 · 19 bxc5 ♗xg2 20 ♗a3! bxc5 21 ♔xg2 and wins)

18 fxe5



'A picturesque position. Black is still a rook up, but he has three pieces hanging, plus the threat of ♘c7+!' (Korchnoi)

18...dxe5 (18...♗c6? 19 ♘xd6+ ♔f8 20 exf6) **19 bxc5 ♗c6 20 ♘c7+ ♔f8?!**

'The losing move. More tenacious was 20...♔e7 21 ♗a3! b5! 22 ♘xa8 b4 23 ♗xb4 ♖xa8 24 ♘f3 ♘d7 25 ♖xd7+ ♔xd7 26 ♘xe5+ ♔c7 27 ♗a5+ ♔b7 28 ♘xf7. White has good winning chances, but the battle is not yet over.' (Korchnoi). But in my view, after 28...♗e8 29 ♘e5 ♖c8 the endgame is still altogether unclear: why should Black lose when he is the exchange up?!

Therefore I would prefer 23 ♗b2! ♖xa8 (23...♗xa8 24 ♗xe5 ♖c8 25 ♖f1 and wins) 24 ♖f1! (not 24 ♗xe5 ♘e4) 24...♖g8 (24...♘e4 25 ♖xf7+ ♔e8 26 ♖c7 ♘xg5 27 ♖xc6 ♔d7 28 ♖a6 and wins) 25 ♗xe5 ♖g6 (25...♘e4 26 ♘xf7) 26 ♗d6+ ♔e8 27 ♘f3 with an extra pawn and a technically won ending.

21...♘e4!? (instead of 21...b5) 22 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 is interesting, but here too after 23 c6+! ♔f6 24 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 25 c7 ♖c8 26 ♗d6 ♗f5 27 c5! b5 (27...bxc5 28 ♖c1) 28 ♖f1 ♔g6 29 ♗xe5

f6 30 ♗d6 Black's position is unenviable.

Thus, based on all of the above analysis, it can be said that in fact 14...♗e5? was already the losing move.

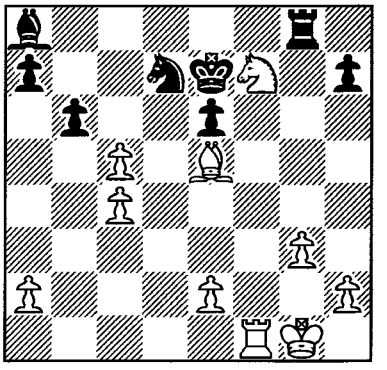
21 ♘xa8 ♗xa8 22 ♗b2?!

Through inertia continuing to play for an attack. 'The suggestion of the commentators was more energetic: 22 cxb6 axb6 23 ♖d8+ ♔g7 24 ♖xh8 ♔xh8 25 ♘xf7+ and then ♘xe5. I was afraid that after 22 cxb6 Black would move his king to g7, but he would hardly have been able to hold a position where he was two pawns down, with one of them already on the 7th rank!' (Korchnoi). That is, 23 bxa7 ♖c8 24 ♗e3 with an easy win.

22...♖g8 (22...♔g7 23 ♗xe5 ♔g6 24 ♖f1 was no better) **23 ♗xe5 ♔e7**

If 23...♘e8, then 24 ♘xh7+ ♔e7 25 ♗d6+ ♔d7 26 ♗f4+. Black has acquired some practical saving chances, but White has not thrown away the win.

24 ♖f1 ♘d7 (or 24...♖g6 25 cxb6 axb6 26 ♗xf6+ ♖xf6 27 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 28 ♘xh7+ ♔f5 29 h4) **25 ♘xf7**



25...bxc5

Relying on the opposite-coloured bishops. Korchnoi attaches a question mark to this move, recommending 25...♘xc5 26 ♗d6+ ♔d7 27 ♗xc5 bxc5, but after 26 ♘h6! ♖g6 27 ♖f7+ White also would have won.

26 ♗d6+ ♔e8 27 ♗c7 ♔e7 (27...♖f8(g7) 28 ♘d6+, penetrating with the knight to c8) **28 ♖f4 ♗c6** (28...♖g7 29 ♘d6 a6 30 ♘e4) **29 ♔f2 ♖g7**

If 29...♗a4!?, then 30 ♗d6+ ♔e8 31 h4 is good. White accurately converts his material and positional advantage.

30 ♘e5! ♘xe5 31 ♗xe5 ♖g6 (31...♖f7 32 ♗d6+) **32 ♖h4 h6 33 ♗f4 ♗b7 34 ♔e3 ♗a6 35 ♗xh6 e5** (35...♗xc4 36 ♖xc4 ♖xh6 37 ♖xc5 ♖xh2 38 ♖a5 Korchnoi) **36 ♔d3 ♖d6+ 37 ♔c3 1-0**

37...♖d4 38 ♗e3 etc.

A very striking game! In the pre-computer era Korchnoi found and developed a risky gambit idea, which radically changed the character of the battle. His opponent was a grandmaster who had devoted much attention to the opening and was reputed to be an excellent analyst, but in the given instance, already at a very early stage, he fell victim to Korchnoi's vivid imagination...

In 1991 Korchnoi won his Candidates match with Sax on a tie-break (3-3; 2½-1½), but in his next, quarter-final match he lost to Timman (2½-4½). In the next Interzonal tournament (Biel 1993) he fought with all his might: he started with 2 out of 2, for six rounds he was in the leading group, he responded to two defeats with a couple of wins, and only after losing in the penultimate round to Anand (a time-trouble blunder in an equal ending) did he part with the hope of becoming one of the Candidates for the crown for the 11th time(!!).

Not long before this Korchnoi played an eight-game training match with the 25-year-old Dutch grandmaster Jeroen Piket, which he won by the crushing score 6-2 (+4=4). In the 3rd game Piket was given a good lesson with Black in the Tarrasch Defence.

Game 44

V.Korchnoi-J.Piket

Match, Nijmegen 1993, 3rd game

Queen's Gambit D34

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 c5 4 cxd5 exd5 5

g3 ♘c6 6 ♗g2 ♘f6 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 ♘c3 0-0 9 ♗g5 ♗e6 (is sounder – *Volume 3, Game No.75*) **10 dxc5 ♗xc5 11 ♖c1**

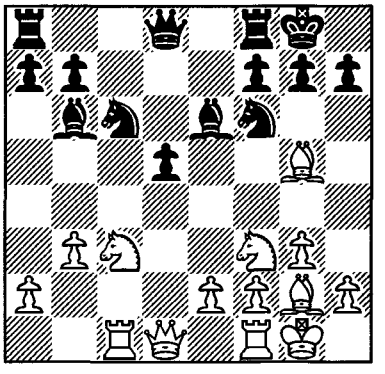
Black was hoping to hold out in the inferior endgame after 11 ♗xf6!? (11 ♘a4 – *Volume 2, Game No.45*) 11...♕xf6 12 ♘xd5 ♕xb2 13 ♘c7 ♖ad8 14 ♕c1 ♕xc1 15 ♖axc1 and ♘xe6 (Rubinstein-Schlechter, Vienna 1908; Petrosian-Spassky, 16th matchgame, Moscow 1969), but Korchnoi has a different plan.

11...♗b6?!

It is better to play 11...♗e7 12 ♘d4, when 12...♘xd4?! 13 ♕xd4 leads to an old *tabiya*, known from the games Rubinstein-Salwe (Lodz 1908) and Marshall-Rubinstein (Lodz 1908; Karlsbad 1911), and 12...h6 – to more modern positions of the type 13 ♗e3 ♕d7 14 ♕a4 ♗h3 with an acceptable game (Korchnoi-Nunn, Hastings 1975/76).

12 b3!

A very strong, deep move of Rubinstein, creating the threat of ♗xf6 and ♘xd5.



12...d4?!

12...♖e8 13 e3! (Rubinstein-Lasker, Berlin 1918) leads to a slight but enduring advantage for White. The move in the game allows the spoiling of Black's pawns, making it even harder for him to equalise.

13 ♘e4 ♕e7 (vacating the d8-square for the rook) **14 ♘h4!?**

Again a novelty, and in a rare variation! Before this 14 ♘xf6+ or 14 ♘fd2 had been played.

14...♔h8 15 ♗xf6 gxf6 16 ♕d2 ♘e5 (16...f5? 17 ♕h6! fxe4 18 ♗xe4 f5 19 ♘g6+) **17 ♕h6 ♘g6 18 ♕h5!**, and after a tough struggle, not without its mistakes, White won the game. In the end, Piket, like many of Korchnoi's other young opponents, was unable to withstand the tension!

I think that after this match catastrophe Piket developed a 'Korchnoi complex': from then on Jeroen normally played very badly and unsuccessfully against him. Thus in 2000 in Wijk aan Zee the Dutchman was not in bad form – he beat Timman and Short, and made draws with me, Kramnik and Anand, but in the last round he was unable to withstand the onslaught of Korchnoi, who was on a minus score and was aiming to improve his affairs at least a little.

In Groningen at the end of 1993 there took place a qualifying tournament for the world championship of the recently created Professional Chess Association (PCA), which was superior even to an Interzonal in strength. In the eleven rounds Korchnoi managed to win only one game, but what a game! And, incidentally, again against a young grandmaster.

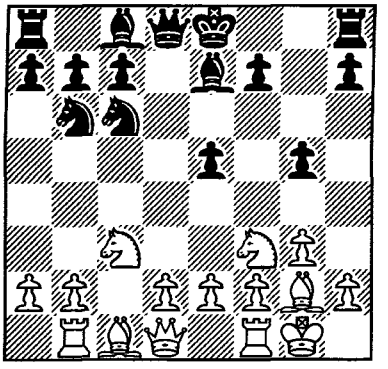
Game 45
G.Serper-V.Korchnoi
Groningen 1993, 9th round
English Opening A29

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e5 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♗g2 ♘b6 7 0-0 ♗e7 8 ♖b1 g5!?

Instead of the usual 8...0-0 9 b4! (an example: Kasparov-Timman, Wijk aan Zee 2001). After this game the audacious lunge 8...g5 became quite popular, although, in my view, given accurate play by White it cannot achieve anything good for Black. It is another matter when you encounter such a move for the first time...

'In my ardour to try an experiment, I was inspired by the following remarkable, but

nearly forgotten game, Smyslov-Korchnoi (Moscow 1960): 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e2 ♗g7 7 ♘b3 ♘c6 8 g4 b6 (8...d5!?) 9 f4 ♗b7 10 ♗f3 0-0 11 h4 a5 12 a4 ♘b4 13 h5 d5 14 e5 ♘xg4 15 ♘d4 ♘h6 16 hxg6 fxg6 17 ♘e6 ♕d7 18 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 19 ♘b5 d4 20 ♗xb7 ♕xb7 21 0-0 ♘f5 22 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 23 ♕xd4 ♕c8 24 ♕e4 ♘xc2 with a draw on the 37th move.' (Korchnoi)



9 d3

If 9 d4, then 9...exd4 10 ♘b5 ♗f5 11 ♖a1 ♗e4 is equal (Claesen-M.Gurevich, Antwerp 1994). The gambit 9 b4!? is more interesting: 9...g4 10 ♘e1 ♘xb4 11 ♘c2 ♘c6!? 12 ♗xc6+! bxc6 13 d4 with sharp play (Gulko-Benjamin, USA Championship 1997; Khalifman-Lutz, New Delhi 2000).

9...h5

A novelty. 9...g4 is inadequate: 10 ♘e1 h5 11 ♘c2 h4 12 b4, as in the source game Hodgson-Bareev (Belgrade 1993). However, Korchnoi did not know about this game and did not consider 9...h5 to be an improvement. 'A worthwhile try is the set-up chosen by Smyslov: 9...f5 and ...♗f6.'

10 a3 h4 11 b4 hxg3 12 hxg3 a6 13 b5 ♘d4?! (a surprise, which confuses White) **14 bxa6?**

14 ♘xe5 ♕d6 15 f4! was correct (this move was overlooked by Serper) 15...♘f5 (but not 15...♕c5 16 e3 or 15...gxf4 16 ♘xf7! ♔xf7 17 ♗xf4 ♕c5 18 e3 ♘f5 19 ♘e4 ♕xa3 20 g4) 16 ♘e4 ♕d4+ 17 ♖f2 gxf4, and after 18 ♗xf4 ♘d5 'Black's position is quite active. Still, it is questionable whether he has proper compensation for the pawn.' (Korchnoi)

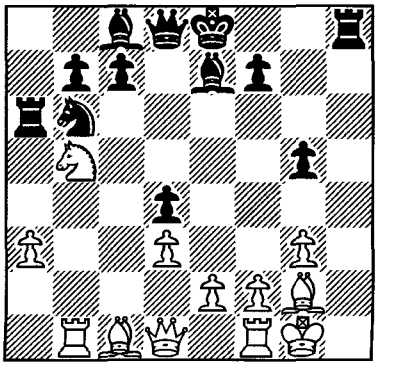
18 ♗b2! is even stronger: 18...♕a4 (18...♕d8 19 ♖xf4 and wins) 19 ♕c1! fxg3 20 ♖f4, and the black queen is unexpectedly trapped. Thus Korchnoi's bold attack was not fully correct, but his opponent went wrong in the complications.

14...♖xa6 15 ♘xd4?

Again 15 ♘xe5 was preferable – now 15...♕d6 16 f4! ♘f5 is bad on account of 17 ♘b5, and so Black was planning 15...♗xa3 'with roughly equal chances.'

15...exd4 16 ♘b5?!

Overlooking Black's reply. 'Here we come across a phenomenon which I would like to call the "young Tal effect",' writes Korchnoi about White's 14th-16th moves. 'Playing a game with all your energy, emanating a kind of hypnotic influence and an air of absolute confidence, a player can sometimes convince his opponent that his tricks are watertight and absolutely irrefutable! I knew Tal very well, and he was aware, indeed, proud of his hypnotic abilities. As for me, I have never had any idea of what happens *off* the board – until Serper started to show me variations in the post-mortem analysis.' (Korchnoi)



16...♘a4! (with the threat of ...c7-c6) **17 e3 c6 18 ♘xd4 ♘c3 19 ♕c2 ♘xb1 20 ♕xb1 ♕d6 21 ♕b3?**

21 e4! ♕h6 22 ♖e1 was more tenacious

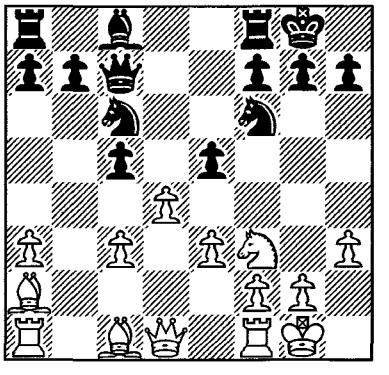
(Korchnoi).

21...♕h6 22 ♖e1 c5 23 ♘f3 ♗h3 24 ♕xb7 ♗xg2 25 ♕c8+ ♗d8 26 ♔xg2 ♖e6! 27 ♘g1 (if 27 ♔f1, then 27...♕h3+ 28 ♔e2 ♖xe3+!) **27...♕h1+ 28 ♔f1 ♖f6,** and Black gained a spectacular win with a direct attack on the king (**0-1**).

Many other young players also found it hard to withstand such a creative approach by Korchnoi to the solving of complex problems, and his primordial, 'crooked' style. When I met him at the super-tournament in the Swiss town of Horgen (1994), before my eyes, with the black pieces, he completely perplexed Boris Gelfand – a good theoretician and one of the top ten grandmasters in the world, who had played in several Candidates matches.

Game 46
B.Gelfand-V.Korchnoi
Horgen 1994
Nimzo-Indian Defence E59

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 (Boris far more often plays 3 ♘f3) **3...♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♗d3 d5 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 a3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕c7 11 ♗a2 e5 12 h3**



12...b6!? (instead of the traditional 12...e4 – a novelty with the idea of ...e5-e4 and ...♗a6-d3; currently 12...♗f5 is fashionable) **13 ♕c2?!**

After a long think Gelfand does not choose the best reply. 13 ♖e1 e4 14 ♘d2 leads to a roughly equal game (Knaak-Korchnoi, Baden-Baden 1995).

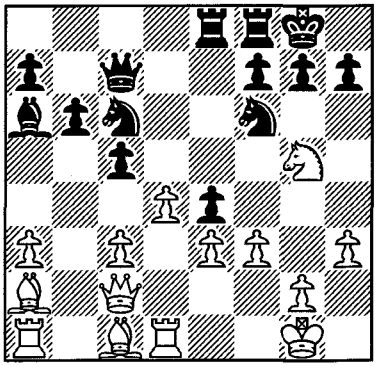
But the main continuation became 13 d5 e4 (or 13...♖d8 14 e4) 14 dxc6 (if 14 ♘h2 or 14 ♘d2, then 14...♘e5 with equality) 14...exf3 15 ♕xf3 with some advantage for White. Here 15...♕e5 or 15...♗a6 used to be played (these moves are considered by Korchnoi), but then there appeared 15...♗e6!? 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 c4 ♖ac8 18 ♗b2 ♕xc6 (Yakovich-Tiviakov, Elista 2001) or first 18...♘e8 (Zifroni-Iordachescu, Panormo 2001), and in either case Black still has to fight for equality.

Gelfand did not want to simplify the position immediately, but his move allowed the opponent to brilliantly carry out his plan. At that time I had only a rather vague impression of this variation and, observing the game at odd moments, I was very surprised when the black bishop appeared at d3 within a few moves. A couple of days later, when I was chatting with Boris, we talked admiringly about the grand scale of Korchnoi's ideas...

13...e4 14 ♘g5 ♗a6 15 ♖d1 (15 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 ♗xf1 17 ♔xf1 ♖ae8 etc. is inadequate for White) **15...♖ae8!**

But not immediately 15...♗d3 – after 16 ♖xd3 exd3 17 ♕xd3 'White has excellent chances of seizing the initiative, thanks to his strong pawn centre and the awakening of his two slumbering bishops.' (Korchnoi)

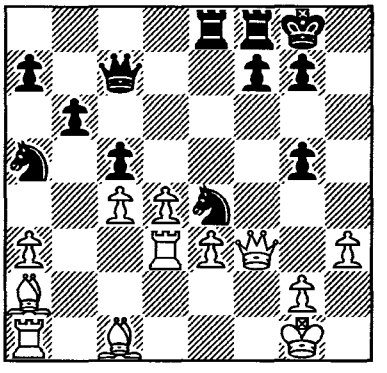
16 f3 (16 d5?! ♘a5)



16...♗d3 17 ♕f2 (17 ♖xd3?! exd3 18 ♕xd3 ♘a5 is now in Black's favour: the move f2-f3 has weakened the king's defences and taken away the f3-square from the knight at g5) **17...h6**

17...♘a5 (Korchnoi) or 17...c4 also came into consideration.

18 fxe4 (after 18 ♘xe4 ♗xe4 19 fxe4 ♘xe4 20 ♕c2! ♕d6!, by restraining the bishops, Black would also have retained some advantage) **18...hxg5 19 ♖xd3 ♘xe4 20 ♕f3 ♘a5** (with the threat of ...c5-c4) **21 c4**



21...b5! (energetic play!) **22 cxb5 c4 23 ♖d1 ♘b3 24 ♗xb3 cxb3 25 ♖b1!**

The only defence against the quick-moving passed pawn: it is bad to play either 25 ♗d2 ♘xd2 26 ♖xd2 ♕c3 and ...♖xe3 (Korchnoi), or 25 a4 ♕c2!

25...♘c3 26 ♖xb3 ♘xd1 27 ♕xd1

By giving up the exchange for two pawns, White almost equalised, but... he fell into terrible time-trouble and after a blunder on the 36th move he was nevertheless forced to capitulate (**0-1**).

After this painful defeat Gelfand also lost to me and to Yusupov. But in the next round Korchnoi won against Lautier, and he and I were leading the tournament with 4 points out of 5. Then Viktor Lvovich reduced speed and allowed Shirov and Yusupov to go half a point ahead of him.

But at the very finish, playing Black against the 15-year-old Peter Leko, who had then only just entered the world arena, he fought desperately for the win which would enable him to cling on to a share of 2nd place (it need hardly be said that the opening was a French Defence). Throughout the tournament Peter had played very cautiously, and Korchnoi, I remember, even speculated: 'I wonder how Peter will play when he's 50, if he plays like *this* at the age of 15?' But in this encounter the young Hungarian had to engage in an open battle, and after great complications and a wild time scramble it ended in a draw.

At the Turn of the Century

At the end of 1994 Korchnoi appeared for the Swiss team at the Olympiad in Moscow. This was his third visit to his homeland since his defection back in 1976. In the summer of 1990 the USSR President Mikhail Gorbachov had restored Soviet citizenship to many cultural figures who were out of favour, including Korchnoi. It stands to reason that Viktor Lvovich was pleased with this decision, stating: 'I see this as a recognition of my contribution to the development of chess in the USSR.' Nevertheless, he declined the Soviet offer, since he was waiting to obtain Swiss citizenship. And only after receiving it, did he fly in the spring of 1992 to his native Leningrad, which by that time had already been renamed St Petersburg. And in the spring of 1994 he also visited Moscow, where he played in the PCA 'Kremlin Stars' tournament (the first stage of the rapidplay Intel Grand Prix – later Korchnoi also played in New York, London and Paris).

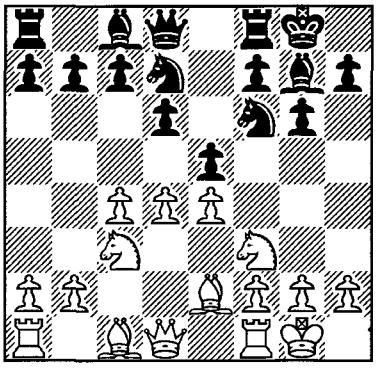
Since then he has happily taken part in chess events held on the territory of the former USSR. Perhaps the most interesting of these was the grandmaster tournament in St Petersburg (April 1997), which assembled virtually the entire cream of Leningrad chess from the second half of the 20th century, apart from Spassky and Taimanov. Meeting for the first time on the same stage were six

emigrants (Korchnoi, Sosonko, Tseitlin, Salov, Yudasin and Komarov), and six 'native' St Petersburg players (Khalifman, Svidler, Sakaev, Epishin, Aseev and S.Ivanov).

Among the tournament favourites was the 20-year-old two-times Russian Champion Peter Svidler, and rightly so: he soon won the national championship for the third time, shared victory with me and Kramnik in Tilburg (1997) and became one of the leading grandmasters in the world. But on this occasion Peter considerably underperformed, and the reason for this was evidently the following wonderful game, prior to which both players had 3 points out of 6 and still retained hopes of a successful finish. The age difference between them was 45 years!

Game 47
V.Korchnoi-P.Svidler
St Petersburg 1997
King's Indian Defence E94

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 0-0 5 ♗e2 d6 6 ♘f3 e5 7 0-0 ♘bd7



The more fashionable move is 7...♘c6 (*Game Nos.39-41*), but Svidler liked to play in the old manner, often outplaying his opponents in the resulting complicated positions, even though they are somewhat inferior for Black.

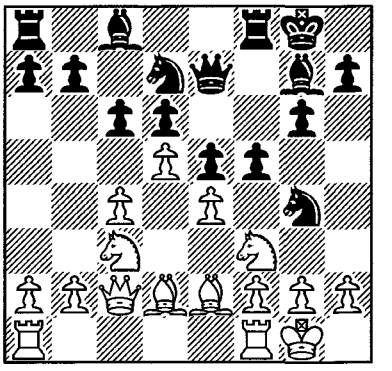
'It is laudable that a young player should aim to get to know the repertoire of the old masters – they had only a fraction of the present-day information, but they understood the game no worse than modern grandmasters!' (Korchnoi)

8 ♗e3 ♕e7 (8...♖e8 9 d5!) **9 ♕c2 ♘g4** (9...exd4!?) **10 ♗g5 f6 11 ♗d2 c6 12 d5!**

In the game Schandorff-Svidler (Torshavn 1997), played a couple of months earlier, Black had achieved a good game after 12 h3 ♘h6 13 ♖ad1 f5 14 ♗g5 ♕e8 15 dxe5 dxe5 16 exf5 gxf5 17 ♖fe1 e4 18 ♘h2 ♕g6 19 ♗f4 ♘f7 20 ♘f1 ♘c5 and in the end he won.

12...f5

If 12...c5?! White was planning 13 ♘b5 with the idea of 13...♘b6 14 b4! a6 15 bxc5 or 13...♘b8 14 ♘e1, retaining the initiative.



13 ♘g5!

An unexpected novelty! The old game Korchnoi-Mestel (Beersheva 1984) went 13 exf5!? gxf5 14 ♘g5 ♘df6 15 f3 ♘h6 16 ♗d3 ♗d7 17 ♖ae1 with some advantage for White – after 17...♔h8 18 ♔h1 ♘fg8?! 19 f4! e4? 20 ♘cxe4! fxe4 21 ♗xe4 he gained excellent compensation for the piece and won on the 43rd move. And again Korchnoi makes a remarkable comment:

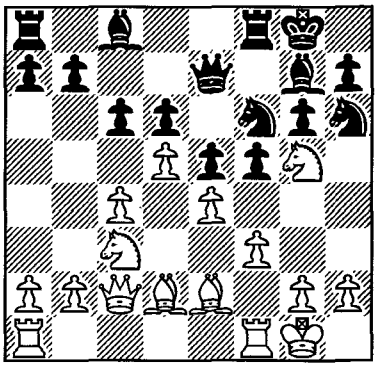
'Malicious tongues will say: Svidler was unlucky – his preparations for this meeting were based on a game that I had played 13 years earlier, and he found an improvement there. But I had forgotten that game, and played differently, and even, they will say, more strongly. Well, firstly, it would have been

good for Emanuel Lasker to remember his games, and during those 13 years I had played twice as many games as Doctor (of Philosophy) Lasker played in his entire chess career! And secondly, would it not be tedious, especially considering the number of games that I have played, to repeat the same thing several times? Even for the sake of practical success. For me, with my character, it would be rather tedious. And one more point: I do not consider myself to be such a classical player, that it is forbidden to make changes. And I make changes with particular pleasure, improving on my own play. Therefore, with only rare exceptions, I play the opening of every game as if for the first time in my life.'

13...♘df6?!

Strangely enough, this is almost the decisive mistake! 13...♘c5?! is also insufficient: 14 b4 ♘xe4 (14...♘a6 15 a3 or, according to Khalifman, 15 dxc6 bxc6 16 b5 with the seizure of the d5-square) 15 ♘gxe4 fxe4 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 ♕xe4, and 'the c6-pawn would have been lost' (Korchnoi). Therefore the commentators recommended the not very pretty move 13...♘b6, which, although it does not equalise, would nevertheless have allowed Black to put up a tough defence.

14 f3 ♘h6



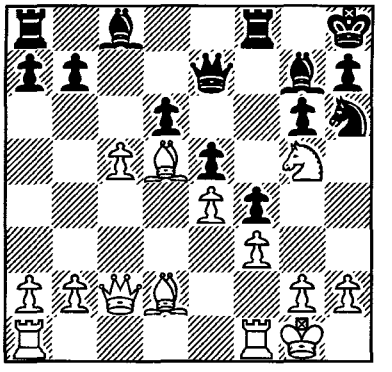
15 c5! (temporarily sacrificing a pawn, White exploits the lack of harmony in the placing of the enemy pieces) **15...cxd5**

As shown by Korchnoi, Black also has great difficulties after 15...dxc5 16 dxc6 bxc6 17 ♘a4 or 16...b6 17 ♘d5 etc.

16 ♘xd5!

This is much stronger than 16 exd5 (Khuzman) 16...dxc5 17 ♗c4 ♔h8 – here Black can still hold on somehow, whereas in the game White very quickly builds up very strong pressure (true, for this he needs to demonstrate remarkable inventiveness).

16...♘xd5 17 ♗c4! (the decisive emergence of the bishop onto the attacking diagonal) **17...f4** (17...dxc5 18 ♗xd5+ ♔h8 19 ♖ac1 fxe4 20 ♘xe4 is unacceptable for Black) **18 ♗xd5+ ♔h8**



19 h4!

Another energetic move – the only one maintaining the flame of the initiative!

19...dxc5 20 ♖ac1 ♘g8 21 ♕xc5 h6 22 ♕xe7

Up till now the play has been forced. Here White could have considered 22 ♗b4!? ♕xc5+ (22...♕e8 23 ♕c7 hxg5 24 hxg5 is hardly suitable) 23 ♗xc5 hxg5 24 hxg5 ♖d8 25 ♔f2 ♘f6 26 gxf6 ♗xf6 27 ♖h1+ ♔g7 28 ♖h2 g5! (28...♗d7 29 ♖ch1 ♖h8 30 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 31 ♖xh8 and ♗xb7, winning) 29 g4! (29 ♖ch1 ♗f5!) 29...♔g6 30 b4 with advantage. But Korchnoi had devised a brilliant combination!

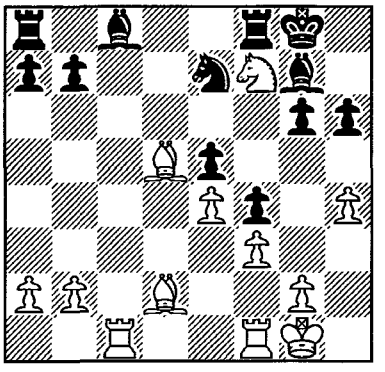
22...♘xe7 23 ♘f7+! ♔g8

After this move Svidler probably thought that the worst was over for Black. 23...♔h7 24 ♗b4 was weaker, for example:

1) 24...♘xd5 25 ♗xf8 ♘e3 26 ♖c7 ♗xf8 27 ♖fc1 ♔g8 28 ♘xe5 ♗e6 29 ♘xg6 ♗d6 30 ♖xb7 (Korchnoi) 30...♖b8 31 ♘e7+ ♔f8 32 ♖xb8+ ♗xb8 33 ♘c6 ♗d6 34 e5 ♗c7 35 ♘d4 ♗c4 36 ♖xc4! ♘xc4 37 ♘e6+ and ♘xc7 with an easy win;

2) 24...♖e8 25 ♘d6 ♘xd5 26 ♘xe8 ♘xb4 27 ♖c7 ♔g8 28 ♖xg7+ ♔f8 29 ♘c7 or 25...♖d8 26 ♗xb7 ♖b8 27 ♘xc8 ♘xc8 28 ♗a5 (Korchnoi), also winning.

But here there followed a thunderous quiet move.



24 ♗b3!!

As Korchnoi admitted, it was not easy for him to refrain from 24 ♘xh6+ ♔h7 25 ♘g4. But in this case after 25...♘xd5 (not immediately 25...♖d8 because of 26 ♗a5!) 26 exd5 ♖d8 27 ♖c7 ♔g8! 28 ♗c3 ♖xd5 29 ♖e1 ♗xg4 30 fxg4 b5 Black would have acquired drawing chances.

24...♖xf7 25 ♖c7 ♗f6

Nothing was changed by 25...♗f8 26 ♗b4 ♔g7 27 ♖fc1 (Korchnoi) or 25...♔f8 (Khuzman) 26 ♗b4 ♗f6 27 ♖d1! a5 28 ♖d8+ ♔g7 29 ♗a3(d6) and wins.

26 ♗b4 ♔g7 27 ♖fc1

A rare construction in grandmaster practice. Such a thing is difficult to calculate in advance: suppose Black were able to disentangle himself?! Then he would have the advantage! But no, Korchnoi's intuition and calculation did not deceive him: there is no longer any salvation. Although for a long time even the 'all-seeing' machine does not understand this...

27...a5 28 ♗a3! (not 28 ♗d6? ♖a6) **28...b5 29 ♗c5** (29 ♗xf7? b4 30 ♗d5 ♖b8) **29...♗a6 30 ♗xf7 ♔xf7 31 h5! 1-0**

The final stroke. Black resigned, avoiding unnecessary suffering after 31...gxh5 32 ♗xe7 ♗xe7 33 ♖1c6 and ♖xh6.

A deep and far from obvious combination – not without reason did Spassky, the honoured guest of the tournament, award Korchnoi the prize for the most brilliant game. And Svidler, after stopping the clocks, shook his opponent's hand and said: 'It's a pity that I'm not wearing a hat – I would have raised it to you!' According to Alexander Khalifman, Peter was in a state of shock after this defeat and later he asked in surprise: 'Look what's going on: in 1984 Korchnoi played quite well, now he plays even better, so what will happen in 2010?'

Yes, even at the age of 66 Viktor Lvovich played with truly youthful ardour! In the 9th round he beat Sakaev in fine style, employing a novelty in a favourite variation of his since the time of Baguio (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 c5 5 ♘e2 cxd4 6 exd4 d5 7 c5 ♘e4 8 g3!?), in the 10th round he overcame Epishin with Black in a topical variation of the Queen's Gambit Accepted, and in the end, scoring 7 out of 11, he shared victory in the tournament with Khalifman and Salov. 'I have to admit,' said Korchnoi in an interview, 'that the support of the auditorium, which was always full, inspired me, and for perhaps the first time in my life I was aware of invisible energy from the spectators.'

The duel with Epishin had an unusual epilogue: a month later, in the European Team Championship, Alexander Beliavsky (incidentally, now the only four-times USSR Champion still alive, apart from Korchnoi) was defeated in the same way. My attention was attracted by both the opening plan, and the comments of the winner.

Game 48
A.Beliavsky-V.Korchnoi
Pula 1997
Queen's Gambit Accepted D20

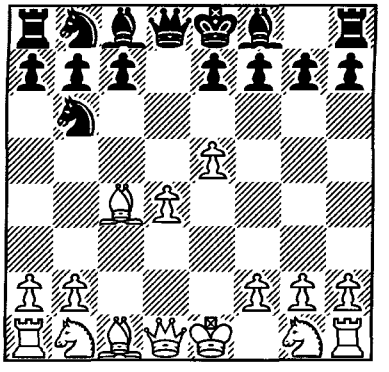
1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4

'The Queen's Gambit Accepted: possibly again the influence of the world champions?' – this was how Korchnoi commented on the move of his opponent Petersons in 1965 (having in mind the influence of Petrosian, who successfully played this opening in his match with Botvinnik), and in 1995 he thought it necessary to add: 'World champions undoubtedly influence chess fashion. Compare the play in present-day tournaments with those of the 1970s and the early 1980s! This is Kasparov's doing...'

3 e4 ♘f6

'Generally speaking, I am convinced that the strongest reply is 3...e5: Black strikes at the centre, not forgetting about the development of his pieces. But in practice it is by no means always – especially in the opening – that the strongest moves are chosen, but rather "that which is interesting". Thus here I was interested in an opening position that is soon reached, perhaps because it reminded me of the Alekhine Defence that I once used to play.' (Korchnoi)

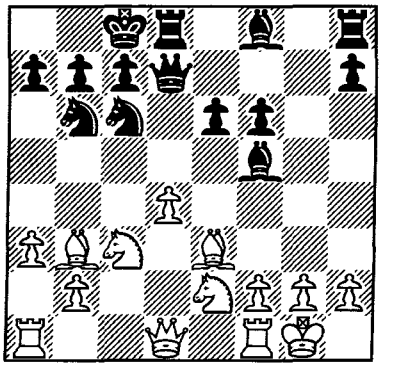
4 e5 ♘d5 5 ♗xc4 ♘b6



6 ♗b3 (according to Korchnoi, 6 ♗d3 is better) **6...♘c6 7 ♘e2 ♗f5 8 ♘bc3 e6 9 a3 ♕d7 10 0-0 0-0-0!?**

This is sharper than 10...♗e7 (Granda-Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 1997).

11 ♗e3 f6 (a later experiment was 11...h5 12 ♕c1 f6 13 ♖d1 ♕f7 14 exf6 gxf6 Van Wely-Korchnoi, Wijk aan Zee 2000) **12 exf6 gxf6**



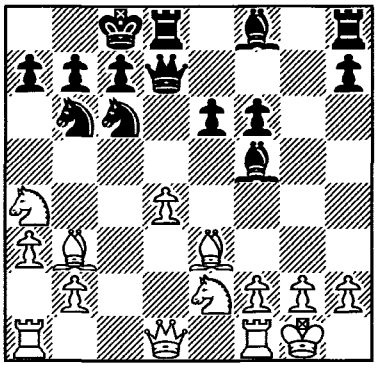
'At the time when this game was played, the theory of this position was still insufficiently developed. However, Beliavsky does not particularly need theoretical recommendations. There are players who make use of theory, and they are the overwhelming majority, and there are also creators of theory. Beliavsky is one of the latter. Without false modesty, I would also assign myself to the creators of chess theory. It is natural that for pioneers, blazing new trails, things do not always turn out smoothly, much to the joy of the users...' (Korchnoi)

13 ♘a4

A novelty. Epishin 'burned his fingers' after 13 ♖e1 ♘a5 14 ♗f4? e5! 15 ♗e3 (15 dxe5?! ♕c6) 15...h5 16 ♖c1? (16 dxe5!) 16...♘bc4 17 ♗xc4 ♘xc4 18 ♕b3 (18 dxe5!?) 18...♘xe3 19 fxe3 ♗e6! 20 ♕b5 ♗h6 21 ♕xd7+ ♖xd7 22 ♔f2 h4 23 ♘e4 ♗d5! etc.

Also known was the comparatively better move 13 ♘g3, to which Black used to reply 13...♗g6, but in the game Piket-Korchnoi (Batumi 1999), not wishing to waste a tempo, he replied 13...♘xd4, and after 14 ♗xd4 ♕xd4 15 ♘b5 ♕xd1 16 ♖fxd1 ♗c5 17 ♘xf5

exf5 he held this slightly inferior endgame.



13...h5 14 ♖c1 h4 15 ♘c5 ♗xc5 16 ♖xc5 ♔b8 with a comfortable game for Black. By the 30th move he thoroughly outplayed his opponent and soon gained a deserved victory (**0-1**).

In September 1997 Korchnoi played a match of six games with the rising start of French chess, the 14-year-old Etienne Bacrot and won 4-2. A year earlier Bacrot had crushed Smyslov (5-1), but it should not be forgotten that Vasily Vasilievich, being exactly ten years older than Korchnoi, by that time had already switched to the 'veteran regime'. But Korchnoi had as though forgotten about his age, and he continued to battle successfully with the best grandmasters of every generation, ignoring the world senior championship.

True, he played with pleasure in exhibition matches and match-tournaments such as 'Veterans against the strongest women players' or 'Veterans against young talents'. Thus in February 1998, Korchnoi, Spassky, Gligoric and Taimanov played a double-round event with Bacrot, Ponomariov, Nataf and Shaked. In his eight games Korchnoi gained more wins than anyone else (four!), like Spassky he scored 'plus two', and the veterans won overall by 16½-15½.

Then in March 1999 Viktor Lvovich again travelled to St Petersburg and 'finally settled matters' with Spassky, defeating him in a rapidplay match of ten games: 6-4 (+4–2=4).

At the turn of the century he took part in three FIDE world championships held on the knock-out system (1997, 1999 and 2001): in the second round in Groningen he lost in a fierce struggle on the tie-break to Short, in Las Vegas he overcame Dolmatov in a tie-break but then went down to Kramnik, and in Moscow, again on a tie-break, he suffered a defeat against Psakhis (incidentally, twice winner of the USSR Championship). The level of Korchnoi's preparation is well illustrated by a game from his mini-match with Sergey Dolmatov, which began with **1 c4**. Here is his commentary:

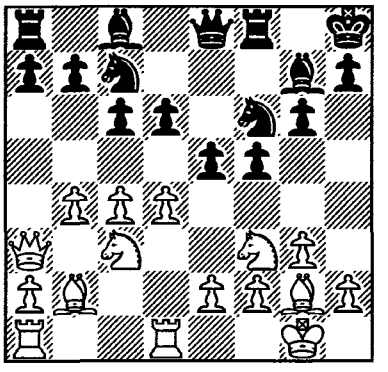
'When preparing for the match, I noticed that Dolmatov relies mainly on the Dutch Defence, in two of its branches: the Stonewall and the Leningrad Variation – set-ups that are very active, but not fashionable, and certainly not 100% sound. A rather strange choice, where I suspect an unusual psychological approach. The majority of grandmasters have developed a scornful attitude to dubious openings. Perhaps subconsciously there exists a desire to punish the impudent opponent as quickly as possible – "How dare he play this opening against me?!" And meanwhile, this opening has been thoroughly analysed in his home laboratory. Disillusionment awaits the grandmaster playing White – using routine methods this so-called dubious opening will not be breached! This psychological context was clear to me, and so I prepared seriously. Even so, I did not manage to find a clear advantage in the Stonewall after 1 d4. This was why I preferred to begin the game with 1 c4, in order to have the option of employing the set-up with the white pawn at d3.'

The game went **1...f5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 g3 d6!** (3...e6 4 ♗g2 ♗e7 5 0–0 0–0 6 ♘c3 d5 7 cxd5 exd5 8 e3 ♔h8 9 b3 ♘c6 10 ♗b2 ♗e6 11 ♘e2 ♗g8 12 d3 ♕d7 13 a3 ♗d6 14 ♕c2 ♖ae8 15 b4... 1–0 Kasparov-Short, Paris rapidplay 1990) **4 d4! g6 5 ♗g2 ♗g7 6 0-0 0-0 7 ♘c3**, and White reached the main posi-

tion of the Leningrad Variation, having avoided the 'Stonewall'!

Moreover, after **7...c6** Korchnoi sprung a surprise on his opponent that he had specially prepared for the match – **8 ♕b3!?** (later in the tie-break he even played 7 ♕b3) **8...♔h8 9 ♖d1 ♘a6 10 ♕a3! ♕e8 11 b4 ♘c7 12 ♗b2 e5?**

In the given instance this standard reply is a mistake!



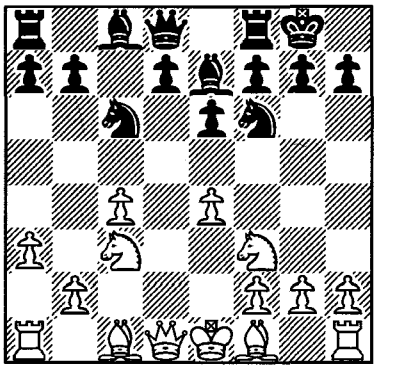
13 dxe5 dxe5 14 ♕a5! ♘a6 15 b5 b6 16 ♕a3 ♘c5 17 bxc6 e4 18 ♘d4 ♕f7 19 ♖ac1 ♗e6 20 ♘cb5 a6 21 ♘d6 ♕c7? (a blunder in a difficult position) **22 ♘b7! 1-0.** A model example of a psychological opening win.

And here is another characteristic comment from his introduction to this game: 'It is hard to find a place on this earth where there is less interest in chess than in Las Vegas – there are enough amusements there without chess! Nevertheless, that was the appointed venue for a major chess event, which influential FIDE officials even called the World Championship.' Typical Korchnoi!

It is staggering that even at the age of 70 he did not reduce his playing activity and the geography of his appearances remained just as broad as before: Olympiads in Istanbul (2000), Bled (2002) and Calva (2004), the traditional tournaments in Wijk aan Zee (2000) and Biel (2001-03), the Stein Memorial in Lvov (2000) and the Najdorf Memorial in Buenos Aires (2001), where, incidentally, he defeated Judit Polgar in a French Defence ...

A notable event was Korchnoi's match with the 17-year-old Ruslam Ponomariov, the future FIDE world champion (Donetsk, January 2001). The age difference between the two players was almost 53 years!

This match of eight games was a very tough one and ended with a score of 4-4 (+2–2=4). Korchnoi's two wins were gained with White in a well-tested line of the English Opening: **1 c4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 d4 cxd4 5 ♘xd4 e6 6 a3!?** (6 ♘db5 – *Game No.37*) **6...♗e7 7 e4 0-0 8 ♘f3**



In the 2nd game **8...d6** led to a 'hedgehog' (incidentally, not only Korchnoi, but also Karpov liked playing against the 'hedgehog': they were always seeking new ideas): **9 ♗e2 b6 10 0-0 ♗b7 11 ♗f4 ♖c8** (11...♘e5!?) **12 ♖e1 a6 13 ♗f1 ♕c7 14 b4 ♖fd8** (14...♘e5 15 ♘d2 ♔h8 is more active, then ...♖g8 and ...g7-g5 or ...♘fd7 and ...g7-g5, à la Fischer!) **15 ♖c1 ♘e5 16 ♘d2 ♕b8 17 h3 ♗c6 18 ♕e2 ♘g6 19 ♗g3 ♕b7 20 ♘b3 h6 21 ♖b1! ♗f8 22 f3 ♖e8 23 ♗f2 ♕b8 24 ♕e3 ♘d7 25 ♖ed1 ♗b7? 26 ♘a4!**, and on the 117th move(!) Black resigned.

In the final, 8th game Ponomariov played rather more strongly: **8...♕c7! 9 ♗g5 b6 10 ♗d3 h6 11 ♗h4 ♘h5 12 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 13 0-0 ♗a6 14 ♖c1 ♘f4 15 ♘b5!?** (aiming to create a non-standard position; something similar occurred with me in my game with

Kramnik, Tilburg 1997) **15...♗xb5 16 cxb5 ♕d6 17 ♗b1 ♕xd1 18 ♖cxd1 d5 19 e5 g5 20 ♖fe1**, and after a protracted struggle, not without its mistakes, White nevertheless extracted a win on the 66th move and levelled the score in the match.

These games are of interest primarily for seeing *how* Korchnoi outplayed Ponomariov: by creating unclear positions, full of life, the veteran tired out his young opponent in protracted play, with time-troubles and mutual errors – and in the end the exhausted Ruslan cracked under the tension and made the last mistake! For Ponomariov the match with Korchnoi became roughly the same excellent schooling as was the match with Reshevsky in 1961 for the 18-year-old Fischer. The young Ukrainian grandmaster grasped the logic of matchplay and made a sharp leap forward. Largely thanks to this invaluable experience, a year later he was able to win the FIDE world championship in Moscow, defeating in mini-matches Morozevich, Bareev and Svidler, and in the final – Ivanchuk (4½-2½).

His opponent also shone after this match, winning a very strong double-round tournament in Biel in the summer of 2001: 1. Korchnoi – 6 out of 10; 2. Svidler – 5½; 3. Gelfand – 5; 4-6. Grischuk, Lautier and Pelletier – 4½. It goes without saying that this was an excellent present for his own 70th birthday (which was also marked in the spring by rapidplay tournaments in St Petersburg and Zurich). In November he added to this a share of 1st place in an open tournament on Curaçao, dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the famous and, for Korchnoi, equally dramatic Candidates tournament (cf. the chapter 'Drama on Curaçao').

Incidentally, Karpov likes to count the number of first places that he was taken or shared in various tournaments, including team events and even the most insignificant ones. Here he has passed well over a hundred and he considers himself to be the absolute record holder – and it would appear that this is so (although the picture would be different if only super-tournaments were counted). But if an equally scrupulous count were to be made for Korchnoi – who knows, might he not overtake his historic opponent?

February 2003 found Korchnoi in Reykjavik, where he played successfully in a category 15 tournament: 1. Shirov – 7 out of 9; 2-3. Korchnoi and Macieja – 6; 4-5. McShane and I.Sokolov – 5½; 6. Adams – 5, etc. In finishing so high in the final table, he was helped by a last-round win over his 'old opponent', the now 20-year-old Bacrot. I have included this game in the book with the approval of Viktor Lvovich himself.

Game 49
V.Korchnoi-E.Bacrot
Reykjavik 2003
Slav Defence D23

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘f3 c6 3 d4 d5 4 ♕c2 (avoiding the main lines of the Slav Defence, where his opponent feels very confident) **4...dxc4 5 ♕xc4 ♗f5**

The alternative is 5...♗g4 6 ♘bd2 ♘bd7 7 g3 (Korchnoi-Bareev, Enghien les Bains 2003).

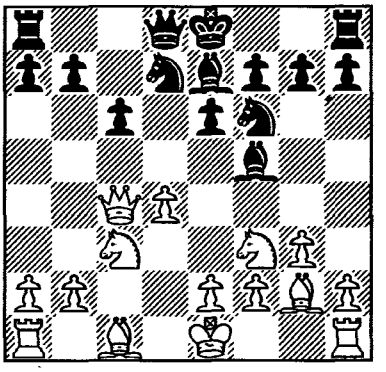
6 g3

Another attempt, made six months later, was not particularly successful: 6 e3 ♘bd7 7 ♘bd2!? (7 ♗d3 ♗xd3 8 ♕xd3 e5 with equality, Korchnoi-Godena, Switzerland 1999) 7...♕c7 8 ♕b3 h6 9 ♘c4 e6 10 ♗d3 ♗xd3 11 ♕xd3 c5, and Black gained a draw (Korchnoi-Bacrot, Biel 2003).

6...e6 7 ♗g2 ♘bd7 8 ♘c3

Three months later, against Motylev in the Russian Team Championship (Tolyatti 2003), Korchnoi tried 8 0-0 ♗e7 9 ♕b3 ♕b6 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♘c4, but after 11...♕a6!? 12 ♗f4 ♘b6 13 ♘fe5 (a novelty – however, it does not change the evaluation of the position) 13...♖fd8 14 ♖fd1 ♗e4 Black maintained the balance.

8...♗e7



9 ♕b3

A rare move, which at least creates some problems by the attack on the b7-pawn. The position after 9 0-0 0-0 had already occurred with the young Frenchman, and he was ready for both the sluggish 10 e3 (Mednis-Bacrot, 4th matchgame, Cannes 1996), and the questionable 10 ♘h4 ♘b6 11 ♕b3 ♕xd4 (Rogers-Bacrot, Batumi rapidplay 2001).

9...♕b6 (9...♘b6 would have diverted the knight from the key e5-square) **10 ♘d2 ♗g6**

On encountering an unfamiliar plan, Bacrot makes a cautious prophylactic move, although the simple 10...0-0 would have given Black a normal game: 11 e4 ♗g6 12 ♘c4 ♕xb3 13 axb3 ♗b4 14 f3 c5, or 11 ♘c4 ♕xb3 12 axb3 ♗b4 13 ♗f4 a5 ½-½ (Goldin-Dreev, Novosibirsk 1989).

11 ♘c4 ♕xb3

11...♕a6!? came into consideration. By exchanging queens, Black steps into his opponent's territory: the playing of complicated endings with prospects of an initiative has for a long time been Korchnoi's forte!

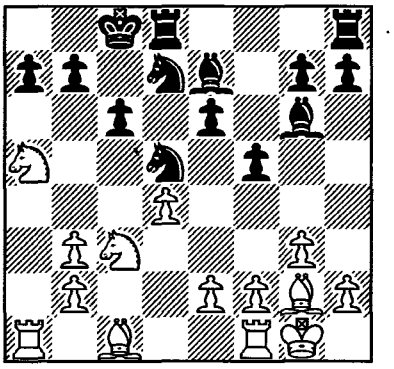
12 axb3 ♘d5 13 0-0 f5?!

Bacrot makes a move on general, positional grounds, supporting his knight at d5 and planning counterplay against the doubled b-pawns. But Korchnoi, as we will now see, also takes into account the dynamic factors of the position, transforming his weaknesses into a strength!

13...♘7b6? 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♗xd5 cxd5 16 ♘b6! was clearly bad for Black. However, after 13...0-0 (Khuzman) he would have had every chance of equalising, for example: 14 ♘a5 ♖fb8 15 e4 ♘b4 16 ♗f4 e5! 17 dxe5 (17 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 18 dxe5 ♘d3) 17...♘c5 18 ♘c4 ♘xb3 19 ♖ad1 ♘c5 etc.

14 ♘a5 0-0-0

This all appears very logical...



15 ♗xd5!

An unpleasant surprise: White suddenly begins an attack on the king! Gufeld once said that at the board it is psychologically difficult to consider variations with the exchange of a bishop for a knight, and the threat of such an exchange is often underestimated. In the given instance Korchnoi exploits the concrete features of the position – the 'holes' around the black king. It is important for White to retain his knight at c3, in order to threaten ♘b5.

15...exd5 (15...cxd5? 16 ♗f4) **16 ♗f4** (with the threat of ♘xd5) **16...♘b8?!**

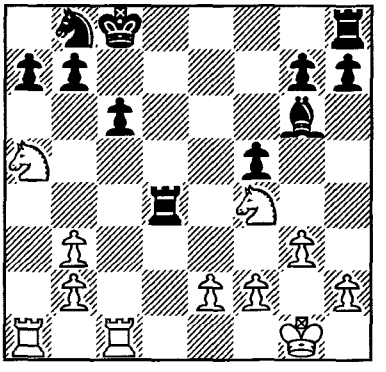
A passive reply with the hope of beating off the first wave of the attack and holding out in the endgame. It looks dangerous to play 16...♘b6 (16...♗f7? 17 ♘xc6! bxc6 18 ♖xa7 ♖de8 19 ♖fa1 and wins) 17 ♖fc1 ♗d6?! 18 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 19 ♘b5 ♖e6 20 ♘xa7+ ♔b8 21 ♘5xc6+ bxc6 22 ♘xc6+ (Khuzman), with three pawns for the piece and a continuing attack, or 17...♖d7?! 18 ♘b5 ♔d8 19 ♘xa7 ♔e8 20 b4 with an extra pawn and a powerful initiative (20...♗xb4? 21 ♘5xc6!).

17...a6! is the only way of defending. Now

nothing is given by 18 b4 ♗xb4 19 ♘xc6 bxc6 20 ♘a2 ♗f8 21 ♖xc6+ ♔b7 22 ♖c7+ ♔b8 23 ♘c3 ♗d6 24 ♖c6 (Khuzman) in view of 24...♘c8! First 18 ♗e5! is stronger, and if 18...♖hg8, then now 19 b4! ♗xb4 20 ♘xc6! bxc6 21 ♘a2 ♗a5 (not 21...♗f8? 22 ♖xc6+ ♔b7 23 ♖c7+ ♔b8 24 ♖xg7+, or 21...♗d2? 22 ♖xc6+ ♔b7 23 ♖c7+ ♔a8 24 ♘b4 with crushing threats) 22 ♖xc6+ ♔d7 23 ♖d6+ ♔e7 24 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 25 b4, regaining the piece with an obvious advantage. 19...♗g5 is also no better: 20 f4 ♗f6 21 b5 axb5 22 ♘xb5 ♖d7 23 ♘a7+ ♔d8 24 ♘5xc6+! bxc6 25 ♖xc6 ♖b7 26 ♖a6 and wins.

Therefore 18...♗g5!? (instead of 18...♖hg8) is stronger: 19 f4 (19 e3 ♘d7) 19...♗f6, and although after 20 b4 White retains the initiative, Black has chances of resisting.

17 ♖fc1 ♗d6 (the terrible white bishop must be urgently neutralised) **18 ♘xd5 ♗xf4 19 ♘xf4 ♖xd4**



20 ♘c4! (Korchnoi demonstrates his tactical sharpness) **20...♗f7**

Bacrot decides to give up a pawn. 20...a6? is not possible in view of 21 ♘e6! with the threats of ♘xd4 and ♘b6 mate! If 20...♘a6, then 21 e3 ♖dd8 22 ♘xg6 hxg6 23 ♘e5 (an ultra-powerful knight!) 23...♖d2 24 ♘xc6! (Khuzman). Material equality would have been retained by 20...b5!? 21 ♘e6 ♖d7 22 ♘e5 ♖d6, but after 23 ♘c5 ♖e8 24 f4 ♖e7 25 ♖d1 White has an overwhelming advantage.

21 ♖xa7

Thus, the position has clarified: White is a pawn up with an active position, and Black faces a difficult struggle for a draw. He does not in fact succeed in organising play against the weak b2- and b3-pawns.

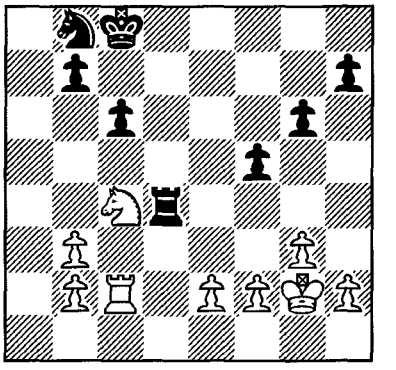
21...♗xc4 (if 21...♖e8, then 22 e3 ♖dd8 23 h4 is good – Khuzman) **22 ♖xc4!** (more accurate than 22 bxc4 ♖d2) **22...♖d1+ 23 ♔g2 ♖e8**

Only White benefits from 23...g5 24 ♘e6 ♖e8 (24...h6 25 ♘c5) 25 ♘xg5 ♖xe2 26 ♘xh7 and ♖f4, winning.

24 ♖c2 (24 h4!? Khuzman) **24...♔c7?!**

24...♘a6 was more tenacious, immediately forcing the exchange of rooks – 25 ♖a8+ ♔d7 26 ♖xe8 ♔xe8, and after 27 ♘d3 there arises a slightly more favourable version for Black of the ending that is reached in the game by move 30.

25 ♖a5 g6 26 ♘d5+! ♔c8 (or 26...♔d6 27 ♘c3! ♖d4 28 ♖a4 ♖xa4 29 bxa4) **27 ♘e3 ♖d4 28 ♖a4 ♖ed8 29 ♖xd4 ♖xd4 30 ♘c4**



30...♖d1?

This avoidance of the knight endgame conclusively ruins Black's chances. Although, in the event of 30...♘a6 31 ♖d2 ♖xd2 32 ♘xd2 ♘b4 33 ♔f3 ♔d7 34 ♔f4 (Khuzman) White would also have gradually won.

31 ♖d2 ♖b1 32 b4 (solving the problem of the doubled pawns) **32...b5**

After 32...♔c7 33 b5 cxb5 34 ♘a3 or 32...♘a6 33 b5 cxb5 34 ♘d6+ ♔c7 35 ♘xb5+ ♔c6 36 ♘c3+ (Khuzman) Black's last sem-

blances of counterplay would have disappeared.

33 ♘e5

Apart from an extra pawn, White also has total domination. The fall of the black kingside pawns and the march to the queening square of the white h-pawn are practically inevitable.

33...♔c7 34 h4 ♔b6 (or 34...♘a6 35 ♖d7+ ♔b6 36 ♘d3) **35 ♔f3 ♘a6 36 ♘d7+ ♔c7 37 ♘f8 ♘xb4 38 ♘xh7 ♘d5 39 ♘f8 ♘b6 40 ♘xg6 ♘c4 41 ♖c2 ♘xb2 42 ♘e5 b4 43 ♖xc6+ ♔b7 44 h5 1-0**

In May 2003 an entertaining internet match – a sign of the times! – was held between teams from St Petersburg (Khalifman, Svidler, Korchnoi and Sakaev) and NAO from Paris, the leading club in Europe (Kramnik, Radjabov, Fressinet and Karjakin). Three games ended in draws, but Korchnoi won against Fressinet and brought victory to his native city.

The list of his appearances in 2003-5 remained almost equally as intensive as before. Korchnoi greeted the New Year 2005 at a tournament in Drammen in Norway, where he defeated the 14-year-old Magnus Carlsen – at that moment the youngest grandmaster in history. The difference in age between them was 59 years! Only with Smyslov was there a greater difference (62), when he played Bacrot.

Also phenomenal is the gap in the dates of birth of opponents against whom Korchnoi has played serious games: from Levenfish (1889) to Carlsen (1990), i.e. 101 years! Only Smyslov has more: from Duz-Khotimirsky (1881) to Bacrot (1983). However, at 'Smyslov's age' Korchnoi is achieving higher results and for the moment he is obviously not intending to stop at what he has achieved. Thus at the Geller Memorial (Odessa, July 2005) he was battling at rapidplay chess with the 12-year-old Ukrainian Stanislav Bogdanovich...

What is the secret of Korchnoi's unique chess longevity? Whereas the prolonging of Smyslov's career was helped by his innate sense of harmony and incredible intuition, back in Soviet times Korchnoi had qualities ascribed to him, which were supposedly typical of Botvinnik: it was said that for success you must without fail develop in yourself a hostility towards your opponent, and enter into a conflict which will unsettle him and raise your own fighting spirit. However, life has shown that this is far from the truth. Yes, Korchnoi has a difficult character (but who has an easy one?). Everyone knows his acrimonious, biting comments, which normally precisely hit their target. Of course, over the past half century he has many times experienced strong hostility, but this can hardly be the leitmotif of such a long and brilliant career.

It seems to me that, apart from enormous talent, it is also a question of Korchnoi's selfless love for chess and his supreme professionalism. All his life he has been tirelessly relearning, and working on the improvement of his style. Spassky rightly considers Korchnoi to be an 'extraordinary hard worker' and says with a smile: 'When he lived in the USSR, I called him a hero of socialist labour, but when he moved to the West I awarded him the title of hero of capitalist labour!'

The key to understanding the Korchnoi phenomenon can be found in the annotations to his own games. What mercilessness with respect to himself, what forceful, objective evaluations! It is this ultra-critical approach to chess problems, developed from his youth, that enables Korchnoi to retain his clarity of thinking and to continue developing. In combination with robust health, this is the basis for chess longevity.

I should like to conclude this chapter about Viktor Korchnoi with some wonderful words by his former second and compatriot, grandmaster Genna Sosonko:

'Once, after he had found a new idea as a result of lengthy analysis, I advised him not to employ it in a tournament that seemed to me

less significant, but to keep it for some more important event. "For another tournament I'll think up something new," replied Viktor, "I don't store up novelties."

'As a rule, Korchnoi's opening finds are not simply a move or a manoeuvre, strengthening a variation or refuting a generally-accepted evaluation. In the majority of cases it is a question of a whole complex of ideas, a new conception in a particular defence or system. And although he has not given his name to any openings, Korchnoi's creations have given an impulse to the development of many of them for decades. His interpretation of positions from the French Defence, when the presence of an isolated pawn is more that compensated by good piece play, the Tartakower Variation in the Queen's Gambit, the Open Variation of the Spanish, which was considered not fully satis factory after the 1948 match-tournament and was revived by Korchnoi at the very highest level, including matches for the world championship, forced the evaluation of many opening set-ups to be reviewed. He devised and introduced a paradoxical knight sortie on the 4th move, which started a whole new branch in the English Opening (1 c4 e5 2 ♘c3 ♘f6 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 g3 ♘d4!?). The variation of the Grünfeld Defence, which today is considered the main one in this opening and has caused Black a mass of problems (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♘f3), was first properly employed by Korchnoi. Many variations of the King's Indian – an opening which he considers very difficult for Black, and in the depths of his heart even dubious, are inconceivable in modern theory without the name of Korchnoi.'

CHAPTER TWO

Anatoly the Twelfth

God-Given Talent

At the turn of the 1960s-1970s, when alarm was growing in the USSR about the lack of new world stars, there finally appeared an amazing young talent on the chess stage – Anatoly Evgenyevich Karpov (born 23 May 1951). His deep, infiltrating style, subtle positional feeling, and extraordinary persistence, practicality and flexibility rapidly raised him to the very summit of chess. It would appear that in 1975 Fischer was the first to clearly discern all these qualities in Karpov, and he realised that such an opponent might prove too tough for him.

Karpov's play was always distinguished by its exceptionally high degree of efficiency. In contrast to Korchnoi or me, Karpov was not a researcher in the openings and he did not work so much on chess, but he was very skilful at selecting and absorbing new ideas, and then making brilliant use of them in practice. How many points, especially with White, did he gather literally out of nothing! An ability to quickly grasp trends of chess development, which at one time also distinguished Lasker, helped Karpov to find his place in the changing conditions of the late 20th century.

The glorious chess career of the 12th world champion can be arbitrarily divided into four periods – the four phases of his creative strength, which constitute the greatest interest as regards his contribution to chess:

1. 1968-75. A time of rapid creative growth and the forming of his style, when the basis of his classical understanding of chess was laid. Here a very great role was played by Karpov's permanent trainer – grandmaster Semion Furman. The peak of this very important period was his Candidates semi-final match with Spassky (1974).

2. 1975-85. The time when Karpov held the champion's title. A slowing of creative growth: he is evidently 'oppressed' by the unplayed match with Fischer. Initially Karpov reaps the fruits of his great preceding work, and this is quite sufficient to silence talk of him being a 'paper champion'. The very difficult match with Korchnoi (1978) forces Karpov to seek reserves of improvement in his game. And in the early 1980s he climbs to a new level. The peak of this period is our first match (1984/85). The most difficult experience in his career: he does not win this match, after leading 5-0 – and he loses our second match (1985).

3. 1986-90. The time of Karpov's 'second wind'. Demonstrating phenomenal willpower, he finds the strength to play a return match (1986) and to complete a resolute rebuilding of his opening repertoire – giving up his favourite move 1 e4, and so on. I think that this was our best match and one of the best matches in the history of chess. After losing it, Karpov nevertheless makes a new surge: he brilliantly wins the super-final Candidates match against Andrey Sokolov (the peak of this period!) and almost wins our fourth match (1987). Even the loss of the decisive 24th game does not unsettle him: he shares victory with me in the USSR Championship (1988), plays excellently in the World Cup super-tournaments (1988/89), wins the next Candidates cycle and battles highly tenaciously in our fifth match (1990).

4. 1991-98. Losing hope of regaining the crown, he experiences dejection and disillusionment: a difficult Candidates match with Anand (1991) and defeat against Short (1992). But after I leave FIDE, Karpov begins a new surge. He wins a match against Timman and becomes FIDE world champion (1993), plays the 'tournament of his life' (Linares 1994) and confidently defeats Gata Kamsky in a match (1996) – the peak of this period! And its ending – a further match with Anand (1998), Karpov's 'swansong' in his many years of fighting for the world championship.

It is in accordance with these periods that I have arranged my description of the career of the last of my great predecessors.

'A serious Boy!'

Karpov was born into and grew up in the family of a factory foreman, in the small town of Zlatoust in the Urals, not far from Chelyabinsk. They were poor – like millions of working-class families in the post-war period. Tolya learned chess at the age of four, by watching the play of his father, who then taught his son the rules. But in contrast to the parents of Capablanca and Reshevsky, he did not lose the first games to his son, but won all of them, without exception (this was, after all, the Soviet chess school!). 'I was ready to burst into tears,' Karpov remembers in the book *Chess is my Life*, written with co-author Alexander Roshal, 'and I would have done, had it not been for my father's words: "Someone has to lose, and if you start crying I won't play with you at all." Perhaps it was then that I subconsciously, intuitively began to grasp a very important piece of chess wisdom: the threat is stronger than the execution...'

At the age of seven he went along to the chess section of the metallurgical factory sports club, in his very first tournament he fulfilled the 3rd category norm, and after two years of enthusiastic battles he also achieved 1st category. At that time the idol of the youngsters was the young Tal and chess was experiencing a burst of popularity. Tolya's first chess books were Panov's books *Course in the Openings* and *Capablanca*. By studying the selected games of the great Cuban, he sharply improved his playing strength and his understanding of the game. He was also taken under the wing of the well-known Chelyabinsk trainer and teacher Leonid Gratvol (who also developed the future grandmasters Timoshchenko, Sveshnikov and Panchenko). At the age of 10 Karpov was already adult champion of the town and a participant in the adult championship of the region. When he was 12, being the youngest candidate master in the country, he travelled to Moscow, to a session of the recently formed Botvinnik School.

Initially the play of the puny boy from the Urals did not make any particular impression on Botvinnik. Karpov: 'His remarks regarding my completely feeble handling of the opening had their effect: I began reading chess literature. The favourite at that period of the school was considered to be Yuri Balashov – the future grandmaster, friend and helper of Karpov. But when Botvinnik, who was passing through Zlatoust, met Tolya's parents and visited them, he passed the verdict: 'A good

family and a serious boy!' And in the second half of the 1960s he was already predicting a great future for him.

Soon the Karpov family moved to Tula, where his father took up the post of chief engineer at a factory. In those years competitions with the master norm were much rarer than today. Tolya took his chance at the first opportunity – in a tournament 'masters against candidates' (Leningrad, summer 1966), where he was seconded by the Tula master Anatoly Matsukevich. In exceeding the norm by two points (+5=10), Karpov gained memorable wins over the experienced Chistyakov and Ravinsky, and also made the acquaintance of Igor Zaitsev – an outstanding analyst, together with whom he later went through seven matches for the world championship (and with whom that summer he played an amusing drawn miniature – cf. *Volume 4, Game No.48*, note to White's 6th move).

The first foreign tournament in his life was in Trinec in Czechoslovakia (1966/67): 1. Karpov – 11 out of 13 (+9=4); 2-3. Kupka and Kupreichik – 9½; 4. Smejkal – 9, etc. In the process the 15-year-old master defeated his main rivals – the 20-year-old Jan Smejkal and the 17-year-old Viktor Kupreichik.

Karpov also greeted the next new year abroad – in Groningen in the Netherlands, where the Niemeijer Cup took place, effectively the European Junior Championship. It is significant that Karpov's first move was made by the honoured guest, Dr Euwe: at the young player's command, the ex-world champion played e2-e4. The battle took place in two stages: a semi-final (seven-round Swiss system) and a final (all-play-all) tournament of eight. Tolya conducted the semi-final stage with enviable pragmatism: after two wins at the start he made five draws and, by sharing 2nd-6th places, qualified for the final (in passing, winning a blitz tournament, which was held on the only free day – 13½ out of 16). Here his rivals were Jan Timman and Andras Adorjan. Karpov started with 2½ out of 3, but Timman scored half a point more! A win over the Dutchman in round 4 decided the outcome of the tournament. The Soviet player then won one more game and took first place with 5½ out of 7 (+4=3).

Botvinnik remarked with satisfaction on the ease of this victory and gave an accurate description of Karpov: 'A clever competitor, he always knows when to play for a win, and when he should make a quick draw. In western chess circles he was even criticised for the series of short draws in the Groningen tournament. In itself, of course, this was not very good, but it is surprising and worthy of recognition that a 16-year-old master should be able to adopt competitive tactics, characteristic of a mature grandmaster.'

In the summer of 1968 Tolya finished secondary school with a gold medal and entered the Mechanics and Mathematics Faculty of Moscow University. And here he easily won the University Championship – 10 out of 13 (+7=6). On arriving that autumn at a training session for the Armed Forces team before the USSR Team Cup, he met the trainer of the army players, the Leningrad grandmaster Semion Furman. That was a truly historic meeting!

Furman later remembered: 'Karpov was enlisted into the team to play on the first junior board. He was a thin, pale-faced youth, rather phlegmatic in appearance. It also appeared that he had difficulty in moving the chess pieces. Was such a player really capable of great competitive achievements?' Here Roshal quotes a joke by Gufeld, who was also seeing Tolya for the first time: 'This boy will never be a grandmaster – he is too light.' But this did not concern Furman: 'Yes, nature did not endow Karpov with a powerful physique – but on the other hand it bestowed on him a rare chess talent and strength of spirit. As well as industriousness and modesty. When I began working with Karpov, I immediately realised that he was a very capable player with a big future.'

This was already shown by the USSR Team

Cup (Riga, December 1968), where the young master scored 10 out of 11 (+9=2). From then on he constantly improved all parts of his game, especially the opening. Furman, an outstanding expert on theory, had the following motto: 'The opponents must be surrounded by novelties, like a wolf surrounded by red flags when it is being hunted.' And he and Karpov surrounded them! For convenience of working, a year later Tolya moved to Leningrad and transferred to the Economics Faculty of Leningrad University. Chess became the main thing in his life.

Soon he confidently won a six-round qualifying tournament of the three best juniors in the country (Leningrad, spring 1969), and then also the World Junior Championship (Stockholm, August 1969). The only difficulties he had were in the semi-final (he nearly lost to Hug and Torre), but in the final he was irrepressible. His 3rd round encounter with the Swede Ulf Andersson was especially important – Tolya literally suffocated the opponent in his favourite Ruy Lopez. The result: 1. Karpov – 10 out of 11 (+9=2); 2-3. Adorjan and Urzica – 7; 4. Kaplan – 6½; 5. Andersson – 6, etc. The first victory, and a brilliant one, by a Soviet player in the world junior championships since Spassky's success in 1955!

Although by the age of 18 he had achieved a very high standard of play and had become an international master, Karpov had not yet played a single serious game with a grandmaster – a paradox of that era, when tournaments with a grandmaster norm were a rarity. With a different tempo of life, he might already have been in contention for a place in the 'Match of the Century' (Belgrade, spring 1970).

In the early 1970s Anatoly gradually made up for lost time. The first step was an unequivocal win in the Russian Federation Championship (Kuybyshev, May-June 1970), which had the status of a USSR Championship semi-final: 1. Karpov – 12½ out of 17 (+8=9); 2. Krogius – 11; 3-4. Antoshin and Dementiev – 10½; behind them came A.Zaitsev, Rashkovsky, Tseshkovsky etc.

Then he flew together with Leonid Stein to distant Venezuela, where he finally played in a prestigious international tournament (Caracas, summer 1970). At the start Karpov became the sole leader – 6 out of 7! And, by his own admission, he was already cherishing the most ambitious hopes... When suddenly he was defeated by Ivkov (after declining the offer of a draw), he almost lost to Panno, and he went down against Kavalek. 'Here it is, the dangerous feeling of the goal being close!' However, after composing himself, he nevertheless achieved the grandmaster norm: 1. Kavalek – 13 out of 17; 2-3. Ivkov and Stein – 12; 4-6. Benko, Karpov and Panno – 11½, etc.

Making his debut in the 38th USSR Championship (Riga, November-December 1970), he immediately established himself among the leading players in the country: 1. Korchnoi – 16 out of 21; 2. Tukmakov – 14½; 3. Stein – 14; 4. Balashov – 12½; 5-7. Gipslis, Karpov and Savon – 12, etc. But more had been expected of him. He was criticised for his overcautious play – 14 draws! Tal thinks that the youth 'was still too respectful towards his senior opponents, and had not managed to rid himself of his timidity towards them.' Furman answers for his protégé: 'In his position now it is hard to experiment. He is obliged to achieve a good result, to ensure himself competitive success. So he has to restrain his emotions, his creative impulses, and play rather dryly.'

The following year, in association with Furman, Karpov continued his steady ascent to the heights of chess mastery. After winning a USSR Championship semi-final (+9=8), there followed a worthy performance in the very strong 39th USSR Championship (Leningrad, September-October 1971): 1. Savon – 15 out of 21; 2-3. Smyslov and Tal – 13½; 4. Karpov – 13 (+7–2=12), etc. However, he was dissatisfied with his play and complained of ill luck: blunders in his games with Vaganian and Smyslov (*Volume 2, Game No.117*), a squandered overwhelming advantage against Savon (in his

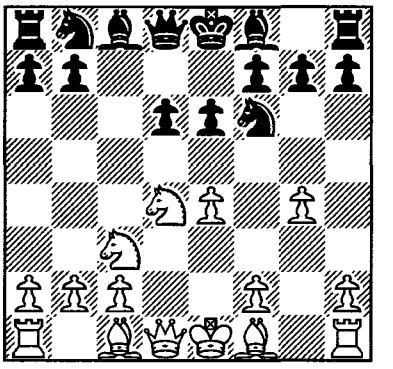
time-trouble!) and so on. 'No one "made me a present" of even half a point in this tournament, whereas I gave many away.'

Despite tiredness (he had been playing for the entire second half of the year), Anatoly did not miss an opportunity to test himself in a rare super-tournament of 18 grandmasters – the Alekhine Memorial (Moscow, November-December 1971). 'At the opening ceremony Anatoly couldn't manage to unscrew the head of the souvenir doll in which his tournament number was concealed, and some wit among the spectators exclaimed: "He isn't very strong... How's he going to last out in such a tournament?" In the first few days of [this event] there were too many short and colourless draws, but closer to the finish the battle became sharper. Our "young rationalist", as Karpov was sometimes called, also had to change tactics. At that point he had scored nine draws and only one win – over the Hungarian Lengyel.' (Roshal)

In the 8th round he drew with the world champion Spassky, in the 9th with Tal, and in the 10th with Petrosian. 'And here I decided: it's all or nothing!' recalls Karpov. 'It was not possible to go on marking time – the opponents to come were very difficult. And in the next round I was, after all, playing White. And this game, in which I defeated Vlastimil Hort, which was a success in both the competitive, and the creative sense, became the turning point for me in the tournament.' Hort was then one of the strongest players in the world (in the 'Match of the Century' he had defeated Polugayevsky on board four), he was ahead of Karpov in the rating list, and at the time of their meeting he was also on 'plus one'.

Game 50
A.Karpov-V.Hort
Alekhine Memorial Tournament, Moscow 1971, 11th round
Sicilian Defence B81

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 g4!?



Karpov won several pretty and instructive games (given in this book) with the Keres Attack, but from the early 1980s he also had some setbacks here, as well as draws, as in the 1st game of our first match (1984/85), where Black did not experience any opening problems.

6...♘c6 (6...h6 – *Game Nos.83 and 89*) **7 g5 ♘d7 8 ♗e3 a6**

With the idea of ...♕c7 or ...♘xd4 and ...b7-b5. Later this move, which for the moment is not essential, began to be deferred in favour of 8...♗e7 9 h4 0-0, after which White can choose 10 ♕d2, 10 ♕e2, or the most energetic move 10 ♕h5 (Sax-Polugayevsky, Haninge 1989).

9 f4

Years later Karpov wrote that now he would have preferred 9 ♖g1. I tried attacking in this way myself, but after 9...♗e7 10 h4 0-0 11 h5?! ♘de5 12 ♘xc6 ♘xc6 13 f4 b5 14 ♕f3 ♗b7 15 ♗d3 ♘b4! I did not obtain anything from the opening (Kasparov-Polugayevsky, Moscow 1979).

10 ♕h5 0-0 11 0-0-0 ♖e8 12 ♖g3 (12 f4!?) is better, as in the games R.Byrne-Spassky (Bugojno 1978) and Van Riemsdijk-Najdorf (Sao Paulo 1978). Or immediately 9 h4, and if 9...♗e7 (9...♕c7) – 10 ♕h5, 10 ♕d2, or, as played by Karpov, 10 ♕e2 (*Game No.71*).

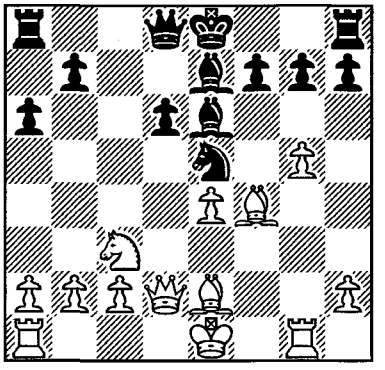
9...♗e7

'If 9...h6 my opponent was probably afraid

of the move I was intending to make – 10 ♘xe6. Immense complications could then have arisen: 10...fxe6 11 ♕h5+ ♔e7 12 ♗h3 *(12 ♗c4 and 12 e5, which have been tried, are also parried by 12...♕e8! – G.K.)* 12...♕e8 13 ♕h4 with consequences that are difficult to assess. It was precisely this that my tournament position demanded.' (Karpov). After 13...♔d8! and ...♔c7 White would still have had to demonstrate that his attack was worth the sacrificed piece.

10 ♖g1 ♘xd4 (10...0-0!?) **11 ♕xd4 e5 12 ♕d2 exf4 13 ♗xf4 ♘e5 14 ♗e2 ♗e6**

14...♕a5 was bad: 15 ♘d5 (Karpov) 15...♕xd2+ 16 ♗xd2 ♖b8 (16...♗d8 17 ♗b4!) 17 0-0-0, and Black comes under a typical bind.



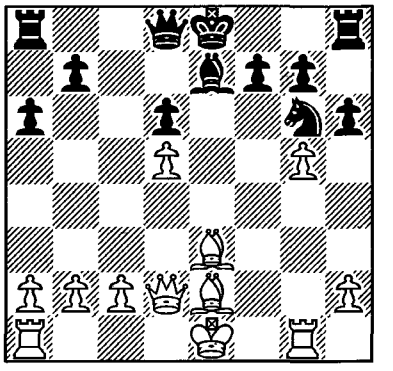
15 ♘d5!?

'Immediately! Otherwise the enemy queen takes up an active position (15 0-0-0 ♕a5!).' (Karpov). True, after 16 ♔b1! ♖c8 (16...0-0? 17 ♘d5) 17 ♘d5 ♕xd2 18 ♖xd2 White also has the better prospects.

15...♗xd5 16 exd5

'Normally one tries to occupy the blockading square with a piece,' writes Karpov, acknowledging that 16 ♕xd5 'would have left me with an advantage, since Black's d-pawn would need to be defended all the time' (for example, 16...♕b6 17 0-0-0 0-0 18 ♖gf1 etc.), and he explains his choice: 'But then my e-pawn would in some instances also have required guarding, which could have cramped my light-squared bishop. Now, however, this bishop is unrestricted in its movements, especially since its black opposite number has already left the board.'

16...♘g6 (16...0-0 17 0-0-0 would have condemned Black to passive defence) **17 ♗e3 h6!**



An original move, sharply complicating the situation – 'risky for both sides!' At the cost of a pawn Black detains the enemy king in the centre and delays the mobilisation of the white army. However, as long as the centre is closed, it is not apparent how to get at the white king, and Black has just as many problems with his mobilisation.

18 gxh6 ♗h4+ 19 ♔d1 gxh6 20 ♗xh6 ♗f6?!

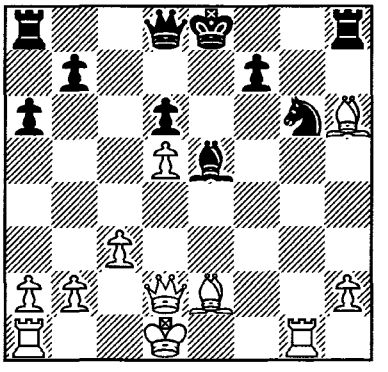
By inventive play Black has almost equalised, but the tempting idea of playing his bishop to e5 becomes the cause of new difficulties. This square would be better occupied by the knight, which now remains out of play. And the bishop, by remaining at h4, would have prevented the rook from occupying e1, and White would have had to spend time on evacuating his king to safety.

Therefore 20...♕e7! was correct with the intention of ...0-0-0, for example: 21 ♗g7 (21 ♗g4 is parried by 21...♘e5!) 21...♖h7 22 ♗d4 ♗f6 (now this is quite appropriate, since Black sets up an active defence, where even the rook at h7 will be useful) 23 ♗xf6 ♕xf6 24 ♔c1 0-0-0 with equality, or 23 ♖e1 ♗e5! 24 ♗g4

♖xh2 25 ♕xh2 ♗xh2 26 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 27 ♔d2 ♗f4+ with a drawn ending.

21 c3 ♗e5?!

Again 21...♕e7! was better, with the same idea of 22 ♗g4 ♘e5!, and if 23 ♔c2 (no benefit is gained by 23 h3 ♘c4! or 23 ♖e1 ♗h4 24 ♖e2 ♖g8), then 23...♖xh6! 24 ♕xh6 ♘xg4 25 ♖xg4 ♕e2+ 26 ♔b3 ♕b5+ 27 ♖b4 (27 ♔a3 ♕c5+) 27...♕xd5+ 28 ♔a4 a5! with a dangerous counterattack. 22 ♗h5 is possible (in order after 22...♘e5 to calmly reply 23 ♔c2), but here Black sacrifices a second pawn – 22...0-0-0! 23 ♗xg6 fxg6 24 ♖xg6, and after 24...♖dg8 25 ♖xg8 ♖xg8 26 ♔c2 ♕e4+ 27 ♕d3 ♖g2+ 28 ♗d2 ♕a4+! 29 b3 ♕h4 it is hard for White to convert his material advantage.



22 ♖g4!

'A multi-purpose move!' (Dvoretsky). For the moment the h2-pawn does not concern Karpov – it is more important not to allow the activation of the black queen. After 22 ♔c2?! ♕h4! 23 ♗e3 ♕e4+! 24 ♗d3 ♕a4+ 25 b3 ♕a5 vulnerable points would have appeared in White's position, and in defending them he would lose his advantage.

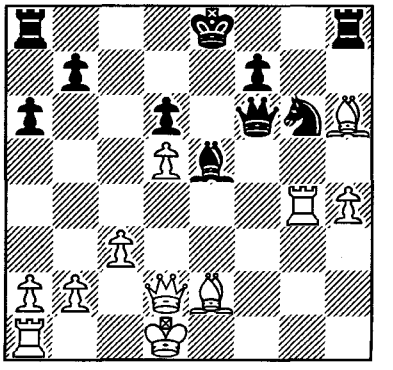
'After 22 ♗g5 ♕b6 23 ♗e3 ♕c7 I would not have achieved much at all,' thinks Karpov. But 23 ♔c2! (23 ♖g2!? Dvoretsky) is more energetic: 23...♖xh2 24 ♖h1 ♕f2 25 ♖xh2 ♕xh2 26 ♖f1 with dangerous pressure. This looks no worse than the continuation in the game, but it leads to a more clarified position where, from the practical point of view, it is easier for Black to defend (26...♔f8, ...♖e8 etc.).

22...♕f6!

'22...♗xh2 was comparatively best, re-establishing material equality.' (Karpov). But after 23 ♔c2 Black has a difficult position: '23...♘e5? leads to the loss of a piece – 24 ♖g2 (24...♕h4 25 ♖xh2 ♕xh2 26 ♗b5+), while if 23...♕d7, then 24 ♖f1 is strong' (Dvoretsky), or 24 ♖e4+! ♘e5 (24...♗e5 25 ♗g4 f5 26 ♕g5! ♘e7 27 ♗h5+ ♔d8 28 ♖xe5! dxe5 29 d6 with crushing threats) 25 ♖h1 ♕f5 26 ♗d3 with a powerful attack, or if 23...♗e5, then 24 ♖f1 ♕d7 25 ♖e4 etc.

23 h4!

'Black was hoping for 23 ♔c2? ♘e7! 24 ♗e3 ♖xh2 or 24 ♗g5 ♕f5+. But now neither 23...0-0-0 nor 23...♘xh4 is possible on account of 24 ♗g5.' (Dvoretsky)



23...♕f5!

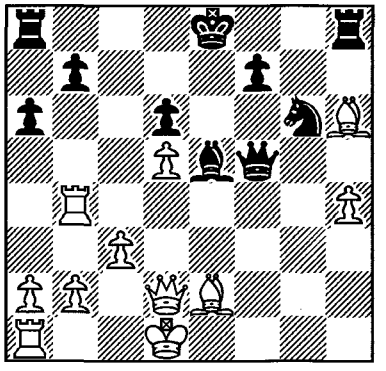
The queen has nevertheless broken free, and it turns out that the opponent's attacking pieces themselves require defence. The white queen is literally torn in two: it has to guard both the d5-pawn, and the bishop at h6. It also cannot move far away from the king, which is stuck in the centre and is preventing the last reserve, the rook at a1, from coming into play, which would immediately change the course of the play.

The scenario of this game is rather unusual: for a long time individual soloists perform on

the stage, while the main forces of both sides merely observe what is happening. Why then did Black lose this strange battle? Simply because at the decisive moment, when seriously short of time, he suddenly forgot to mobilise his 'spectators'...

24 ♖b4!

'An excellent square for the rook!' (Karpov). It would appear that 24 ♖a4 too is strong, also preventing queenside castling (24...0-0-0? 25 ♗g4) and in the event of 24...♕d7 25 ♖b4! gaining an important tempo for ♔c2. But after 24...♘e7! 25 ♗e3 ♖g8 26 ♗b5+ (26 ♔c1 ♖g3!) 26...♔f8 27 ♗h6+ ♗g7 the situation would have become more complicated.



24...♗f6?

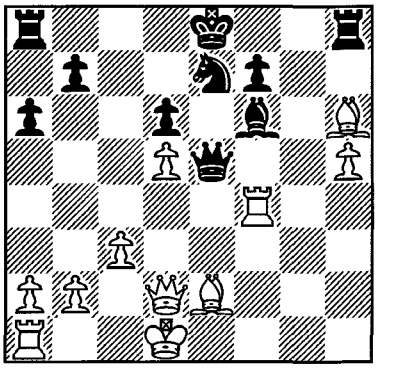
Losing control of the f4-square, which White promptly uses as a staging post and consolidates his position. Black did not have equality in any case, but after 24...♖g8 25 ♗d3 (25 ♖xb7? ♘f4; 25 ♕g5!? ♘e7 26 ♕xf5 ♘xf5 27 ♗g5 f6 is unclear) 25...♕h3! 26 ♔c2 ♘xh4 or 24...♘e7 25 ♗g5 h6 26 ♗e3 ♗g3 27 h5 ♘xd5 he would at least have regained the pawn and retained some practical counterchances.

25 h5 (driving back the knight and at the same time making his passed pawn more defendable) **25...♘e7** (25...♘e5? 26 ♖f4) **26 ♖f4!**

An obstinate rook! After 26 ♕f4?! (to quickly activate the pieces at the cost of the d5-pawn) there could have followed 26...♖xh6! 27 ♕xh6 ♘xd5 28 ♖g4 (28 ♖xb7 ♕e4!) 28...0-0-0 29 ♕d2 ♖c8 with a dangerous initiative for the exchange.

26...♕e5

The culminating moment of the battle has been reached.



27 ♖f3?

The rook displays miracles of manoeuvrability, creating or, on the contrary, parrying one threat after another. But it is still working in isolation, and the undefended state of White's queenside demands extreme accuracy of him! By leaving his h5-pawn undefended for an instant, he throws away his advantage.

Meanwhile – a fact not mentioned by the commentators! – the rook had some better moves: 27 ♖f1, 27 ♖f2 or even the extravagant 27 ♖a4. Say, after 27 ♖f1 Black's problems are not solved by 27...♖xh6 28 ♕xh6 ♘f5 in view of 29 ♖xf5 ♕xf5 30 ♕e3+ ♔f8 31 ♕f3, when he remains a pawn down. And in the event of 27...0-0-0 28 ♗f4! (but not 28 ♔c2 ♖xh6! 29 ♗g4+ ♔b8 30 ♕xh6 ♕e4+ with a draw) 28...♕xd5 29 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 30 ♗d2 or 28...♕e4 29 c4 ♖hg8 30 ♕d3! ♕xd3+ (30...♕g2 31 ♔c2) 31 ♗xd3 ♗xb2 32 ♖b1 he has a difficult endgame.

27...♘xd5?!

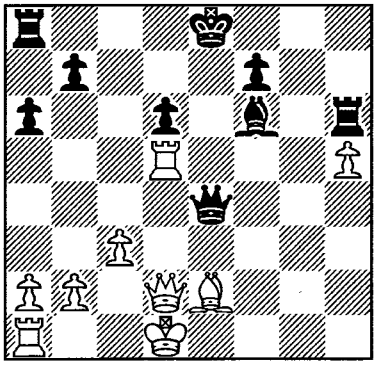
Karpov does not comment at all on this time-trouble move. A critical evaluation of it could have destroyed the myth of the completeness of the game, which states that the

winner did not allow the opponent a single saving chance. Karpov wrote that the threat of 28 ♗f4 'forced' Black to follow a dangerous path. But if Hort had castled queenside, White would have had problems with his d5-pawn, with his king, which is blocking in the rook at a1, and with the overloading of his queen.

'After 27...0-0-0! the outcome would have remained unclear. 28 ♔c2? ♖xh6 is obviously incorrect. If 28 ♖d3 there follows 28...♖dg8! 29 ♗f4 *(29 ♗e3 ♘f5 – G.K.)* 29...♕f5 with the unpleasant threat of ...♖g2. 28 ♗e3 ♘xd5 29 ♗d4 ♕e6 is unconvincing, while in the event of 28 ♗f4 it is not apparent how to cast doubts on the simple 28...♕xh5!' (Dvoretsky). Moreover, after 29 c4 ♕g6 30 ♖f1 ♕g7 31 ♔c1 ♘g6 32 ♗e3 ♖de8 Black has a comfortable game.

28 ♖d3! ♖xh6 (28...♘e7? 29 ♗f4 ♕f5(e4) 30 ♖xd6) **29 ♖xd5** (of course, not 29 ♕xh6? ♗g5 30 ♕h7 ♘e3+ Karpov) **29...♕e4**

After 29...♕e6 White had a choice between an attack with material equal – 30 ♔c2, finally bringing the a1-rook into play, and a prosaic endgame with an extra pawn – 30 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 31 ♕xd6 ♖d8 32 ♕xd8+ ♗xd8 33 ♔c2 etc.



30 ♖d3!

A brilliant practical chance (♖e3 is threatened), which brings instant success. The rook displays enviable efficiency, defeating the entire hostile army practically on its own! After 30 ♕xh6 ♕xd5+ 31 ♔c2 Black could have defended by 31...♗e5 32 ♕e3 (32 ♕g5?! ♕e4+ 33 ♗d3 ♕a4+ 34 b3 ♕a5 with equality) 32...0-0-0 or even 31...♕f5+ 32 ♗d3 ♕f2+ 33 ♕d2 (33 ♔b3 ♕b6+) 33...♕xd2+ 34 ♔xd2 ♔e7, and the endgame with opposite-coloured bishops promises a draw.

30...♕h1+?

A time-trouble catastrophe. 30...♕h7 was essential, for example: 31 ♗g4 (31 ♖xd6? ♗g5!; nothing is also achieved by 31 ♗f3 ♗g5! or 31 ♕e3+ ♗e5) 31...♗g5! 32 ♕e2+ ♔f8 33 ♔c2 ♖e8 or 31 ♔c2 0-0-0 32 ♖f1 ♖e8 33 ♗g4+ ♔b8 with chances of a successful defence.

31 ♔c2 ♕xa1 32 ♕xh6 ♗e5 33 ♕g5!

Preventing queenside castling, threatening ♕g8+ and opening the way for the h-pawn. In this hopeless position (if 33...♖d8, then 34 ♔b3 or 34 a3) Black lost on time (**1-0**). The game was judged to be the best in the tournament.

Then, after a draw with Tukmakov, the 20-year-old grandmaster gained two more cool-headed wins. In his game with Bronstein, he employed his favourite plan with 6 ♗e2 against the Najdorf Variation of the Sicilian Defence. Bronstein tried to improve Black's play compared with the game Geller-Fischer (*Volume 2, Game No.98*, note to Black's 7th move), but without success. On the 23rd move White won a pawn, and at this moment, according to Roshal, above the noise of the press centre everyone heard the quiet and slow voice of Furman: 'When Tolya is ahead on material, he wins. About this I have no qualms.' The next day Karpov defeated Korchnoi in good style with Black. After draws with Stein and Smyslov, he beat Savon in the last round and, by catching Leonid Stein, he shared 1st-2nd places with him!

Regarding this, Botvinnik said in a telephone conversation to Kotov: 'Remember this day, 18 December 1971. In our country a new chess star of the first magnitude has appeared!' And on the pages of *64* Petrosian too gave a high appreciation of Karpov's play: 'I

like his points, his approach to chess, I like his competitive character, his prudence. I liked the fact that towards the end of the tournament he put on speed, having evidently reckoned beforehand that thanks to his youth he would have more strength than those older than him, and with a spurt he overtook many as though they were standing still. I think that today Karpov is our main chess hope – perhaps in the next few years he will become the most insurmountable barrier in the path of western players to the world crown.'

The FIDE President Max Euwe also called Karpov a probable future chess king. And Anatoly himself, when asked in an interview 'will you be world champion?', answered with disarming frankness: 'Yes, I probably will. Only not in the next four years. There is too much that I don't yet know.'

Only a couple of weeks had passed, when Karpov set off to the traditional tournament in Hastings (1971/72), where he started with 7 out of 8! Then, after a draw with Black against Gligoric, he won another game and... sensed that his strength was on the wane: 'To be honest, I was simply worn out.' After a loss in the 14th round to Korchnoi, 'by incredible efforts' he defeated Markland in the decisive game – and he caught his only rival: 1-2. Karpov and Korchnoi – 11 out of 15; 3-4. Byrne and Mecking – 9½; 5-6. Gligoric and Najdorf – 8½; 7-8. Andersson and Unzicker – 8, etc.

His next appearance, in the USSR Team Championship (Moscow, March 1972), is memorable for the splendid positional wins with White against Smyslov and Taimanov, and with Black against Stein. In this game Anatoly demonstrated that amazing tenacity and resourcefulness in defence which was later to become famous, and he accurately parried the direct attack of his formidable opponent. Such ingenuity had distinguished Karpov from his very childhood, when he did not yet know any opening theory and often ended up in difficult positions.

That same spring a grandiose double-round blitz tournament of the strongest Soviet players was held in Moscow. By winning 12 successive games in the second half (against Kholmov, Tal, Stein, Bronstein, Polugayevsky, Taimanov, Balashov etc.), Karpov ended up sharing 1st-2nd places with Tukmakov from Odessa. 'This exhausting event for a long time removed Karpov's taste for blitz, but he did not forget what for some reason he considered to be a failure. When he happened to be in Odessa, he found an opportunity to meet Tukmakov in a blitz match. With the score standing at 0-13 his opponent surrendered...' (Roshal)

Soon Anatoly led the Soviet team in his second Student Olympiad (Graz, August 1972). A year earlier he had played on board three (+7=1), but now he showed himself to be a worthy leader (+5=4). Anatoly Bykhovsky, the trainer of the USSR youth team, recalls:

'Those Olympiads genuinely revealed Karpov for me. In Puerto Rico the ease and elegance of his play created an indelible impression. Usually he was the first to finish his games, after spending not more than an hour on his clock. After losing, his opponents looked somehow perplexed: it appeared that they did not understand at all the ideas and moves of the young grandmaster. In my view, Karpov has such an original playing style, that it is hard even to name his chess predecessor, and this is always an indication of genuine talent... In Graz he played Robert Hübner. We have always found it hard against the West German team, and here Hübner was leading Karpov in the battle for the best result on board one. This was the same Hübner who had been defeated only narrowly in a Candidates match by Petrosian (and the same Hübner who soon was again to perform brilliantly at the World Olympiad in Skopje). It was a critical encounter in all respects: it was due to determine the order of strength for many years ahead and show how Karpov compared with the leading western grandmaster. Anatoly

showed that he understood the position both more subtly, and more deeply!'

Such an 'acquaintance' with foreign stars of the new generation was typical of Karpov: before Hübner, I should remind you, he defeated Timman (1967/68), and Andersson (1969), and the 'chess Pele' – the future two-times winner of Interzonal tournaments, the Brazilian Henrique Mecking (Hastings 1971/72).

He also shone in his first world Olympiad (Skopje, autumn 1972), making the best score on the 1st reserve board (+12–1=2). Tal: 'This was a genuine "benefit performance" by Anatoly. Only in Skopje did I realise that Karpov was indeed capable of the highest achievements. Previously too he had gained excellent results, but in the creative sense his play did not impress me. Now I admire Karpov's games purely chess-wise. At the Olympiad, on his own he played almost as many such games as all the other team members put together. And therefore I find it impossible to choose which of his games was the best.'

By a decision of FIDE, Karpov, as world junior champion, was admitted into the 1973 Interzonal tournament without having to qualify. This relieved him of the need to play in the Zonal, 40th USSR Championship, and together with Petrosian and Keres he set off to a super-tournament in San Antonio (November-December 1972), arranged on the wave of the chess boom reigning in the USA after Fischer's victory in the match with Spassky. There the young grandmaster, initially competing with Larsen and Keres, again started with 7 out of 8!

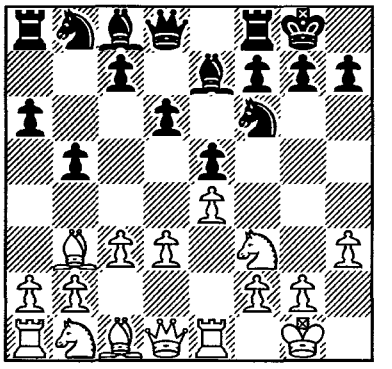
Game 51

A.Karpov-S.Gligoric

San Antonio 1972, 8th round

Ruy Lopez C94

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘b8 10 d3



The theoretical disputes over 10 d4, which have lasted till this day, were something that Karpov would be prepared for a year later, but for the moment, against an expert on the Breyer Variation, he chooses a more restrained, but no less venomous set-up, where the slow advance of the d-pawn is compensated by the threat of it appearing at d4 at a moment that is more favourable for White.

10...♘bd7 11 ♘bd2 ♗b7 12 ♘f1 ♘c5 13 ♗c2 ♖e8 14 ♘g3 ♗f8 15 b4

Driving the knight from its strong position, but also giving the opponent a pretext for counterplay on the queenside. In the event of 15 ♘h2 Black succeeds in carrying out the counter 15...d5! (15...♘e6 16 d4 exd4 cxd4 c5! with equality, Schmid-Spassky, San Juan 1969) 16 ♕f3 h6 17 ♘f5 a5 18 ♘g4 ♘xg4 19 hxg4 a4 20 ♗e3 ♘e6 21 ♕g3 dxe4 22 dxe4 ♕f6 23 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 24 ♕f3 ♘g5 25 ♕e2 ♗c6 with a slight advantage (Vasyukov-Karpov, Leningrad 1971).

15...♘cd7 16 d4

Tal several times played 16 ♗b3, provoking double-edged complications: 16...d5!? 17 ♗g5 a5 18 a3 dxe4 19 ♘xe4 h6 20 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 21 ♘xe5 ♖xe5! 22 ♖xe5 hxg5 23 ♖xb5 ♗d5. However, it is safer to reply 16...a5 17 a3 axb4 18 cxb4 h6 19 d4 (19 ♘f5 d5! Tal-Spassky, 11th matchgame, Tbilisi 1965) 19...c5 20 bxc5 dxc5 21 dxe5 ♘xe5 22 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 23 ♗b2 ♖e8 24 ♕f3 c4 25 ♗c2 (Tal-Smejkal, Tallinn 1971), and now Black can equalise with the

queen manoeuvre 25...♕d2! 26 ♖ac1 ♕g5.

16...h6

It is easier to equalise with the simplifying operation 16...a5!? 17 ♗d2 (or 17 a3 axb4 18 cxb4 c5 Vasyukov-Averbakh, Moscow 1964) 17...axb4! 18 cxb4 exd4 19 ♘xd4 d5 (Tal-Timman, Niksic 1983), which is what put the variation with 10 d3 out of use.

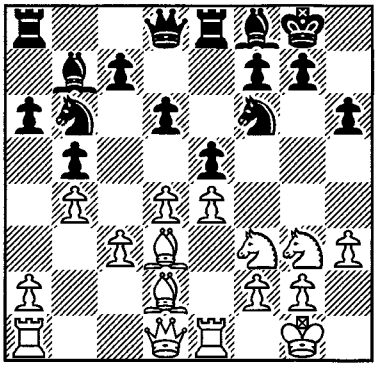
17 ♗d2 (a prophylactic defence of the b4-pawn against attacks by the bishop at f8)

17...♘b6

'A solid positional move in Gligoric's style. The central counter 17...d5 could have taken the game along the lines of tactical complications, which are by no means without danger for Black.' (Karpov)

18 ♗d3

Continuing the useful prophylaxis: from d3 the bishop hinders counterplay with ...a6-a5. Therefore Black begins preparing ...c7-c5.



18...♖c8

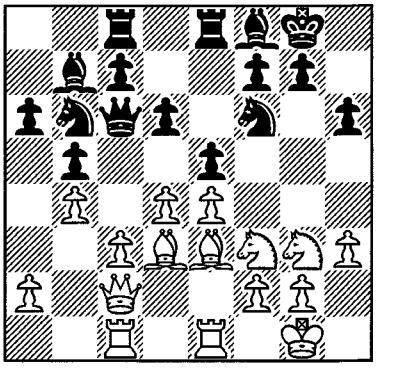
Six months later the game Karpov-Spassky (Moscow 1973) went 18...g6 19 ♕c2 ♘fd7 20 ♖ad1 ♗g7 (20...c5!? 21 bxc5 dxc5 22 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 23 dxe5 ♖xe5 24 ♗f4 ♖e6 is also not bad) 21 dxe5! dxe5 22 c4! bxc4 23 ♗xc4 ♕e7? (23...♘xc4 24 ♕xc4 ♖e6! 25 ♗e3 ♖d6 was correct, with equality – Karpov) 24 ♗b3! c5 25 a4! (it turns out that White is not obliged to take on c5, but can strengthen his position by giving up the exchange) 25...c4 26 ♗a2 ♗c6 27 a5 ♗a4 28 ♕c1 ♘c8 29 ♗xh6 ♗xd1 30 ♖xd1 ♘d6? (Karpov recommends 30...♘f8 31 ♗xc4 ♘d6 32 ♗g5 ♗f6) 31 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 32 ♕g5!! (the decisive invasion; 32 ♕d2? ♘f6 33 ♕xd6? is bad on account of 33...♖ad8!) 32...f6 33 ♕g4 ♔h7 34 ♘h4!, and Black resigned in view of 34...♘f8 35 ♘xg6! ♘xg6 36 ♖xd6! ♕xd6 37 ♕h5+ ♔g8 38 ♘f5!

19 ♕c2 ♕d7?

'The start of an unsuccessful manoeuvre. The queen heads for c6, intending to stand in front of its pawns. But why then did Black waste time on 18...♖c8 ?' (Karpov)

The critical position would have arisen after 19...exd4 20 cxd4 c5 21 bxc5 (21 d5!? ♘fd7!) 21...dxc5 22 d5. Karpov judged it to be advantageous to White. 'At any event, neither Gligoric nor Spassky went in for this position.' All the same, this was the only way that Black could have justified his move 18...♖c8, following up with 22...c4 23 ♗f1 b4 or 23...c3.

20 ♖ad1 ♕c6 21 ♗e3 ♘a4 22 ♖c1 (threatening c3-c4) **22...♘b6**



23 ♕b1

Again prophylaxis, although on this occasion 'the immediate 23 ♘d2 was better, followed by ♘b3 (and possibly ♘a5), not fearing 23...d5 in view of 24 dxe5 ♖xe5 25 ♗d4 dxe4 26 ♘dxe4.' (Karpov). The delay of just one move allows Black to prevent the unpleasant knight manoeuvre.

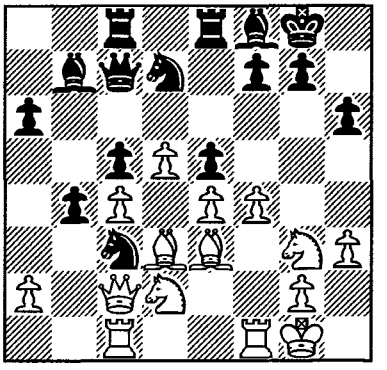
23...♕d7 24 ♘d2 c5! 25 bxc5 dxc5 26 d5

Because of the vulnerability of his knight at b6, Black does not manage to advance his

pawn to c4, and White creates an impregnable bastion in the centre, cramping the opponent's forces.

26...♘a4 27 c4! b4 28 ♖f1! ♕c7 29 f4 ♘d7 30 ♕c2 ♘c3

Black is ready to give up a pawn – merely to force the exchange of the white bishop for this knight, so as then to try and erect a defensive wall on the dark squares.



31 f5! ♘f6 32 ♘e2!

'It was perhaps sounder to win a pawn by 32 ♘f3 and 33 ♗d2, but during the game I thought that then Gligoric would succeed in restraining by assault on the kingside by organising a dark-squared blockade (...♗e7 and ...♘h7). Therefore I decided not to waste time.' (Karpov)

32...♘xe2+ 33 ♗xe2 ♗d6 34 g4! ♔f8!

A blockade can no longer be organised by 34...♕d8 35 h4 ♘h7 36 ♘f3 ♗e7 due to 37 ♔g2 ♗xh4 38 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 39 ♖h1 ♕f6 40 ♖h5 ♕d6 41 ♖ch1 ♔f8 42 ♖xh6! gxh6 43 ♖xh6, shattering the defence. Therefore the black king flees from the danger zone.

35 h4 ♔e7 36 g5 hxg5 37 hxg5 ♘d7 38 ♗g4

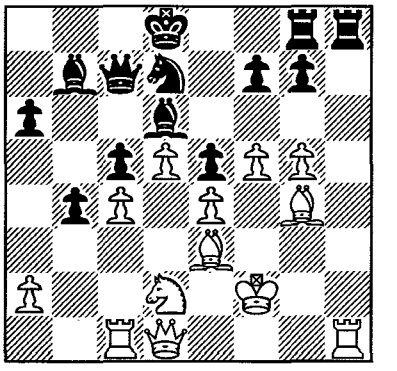
'The first onslaught has enabled White to gain an appreciable advantage in space. To build on his success he has to bring up the reserves.' (Karpov)

38...♖g8 39 ♔f2 ♖h8 40 ♖h1 ♖cg8 41 ♕d1

41 a3! was stronger: 41...a5 42 ♕a4 (with the threat of ♘b3) 42...♘b6 43 ♕b5! (the queen is quite safe in the thick of the enemy forces, and Black's bastions quickly collapse) 43...♖xh1 44 ♖xh1 ♖a8 45 f6+! (Karpov) 45...gxf6 46 ♖h6!, or 44...♗c8 45 ♕xa5 ♗d7 46 f6+ gxf6 47 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 48 ♕xc7 ♗xc7 49 axb4 cxb4 50 gxf6+ ♘xf6 51 ♔f3 ♘g4 52 ♗a7 ♔d7 53 c5 and wins.

41...♔d8

41...f6, which Karpov considered necessary, would also hardly have enabled Black to escape serious difficulties. And 41...♕a5 42 ♕b3 ♗c8 would not have prevented White from advantageously opening the queenside: 43 ♔g3 ♔d8 44 ♖hf1! ♔c7 45 ♖a1!



42 ♕g1!

At first sight an inexplicable queen manoeuvre. 'Such moves are very difficult to find!' writes Karpov, and he very intelligibly explains the reasons for his decision:

'White has an obvious spatial advantage. In order to increase his positional gains, he needs to find a clear plan for regrouping his pieces. Here are my basic thoughts regarding the position: 1) Black has only one obvious weakness – the c5-pawn; an attack on it should be arranged quickly – this will enable the manoeuvrability of the opponent's pieces to be restricted; 2) the best square for the king is f3, where it is not liable to be checked, it overprotects the bishop at g4, and it opens the g1-a7 diagonal for the bishop and queen battery and the 2nd rank for rook manoeuvres; 3)

White must fight to control the h-file and develop an initiative on the kingside; at a favourable moment he can switch the entire weight of the struggle to the opposite flank, exploiting the great mobility of his forces. White's last move complies with all these conditions.'

42...♘b6 43 ♖h2 ♕e7?

Black does not yet sense the danger to his queenside and he tries to fight for control of the h-file (44 ♕h1 ♕d8), instead of denying the white knight the possibility of transferring via b3 to a5 – 43...a5! and ...a5-a4.

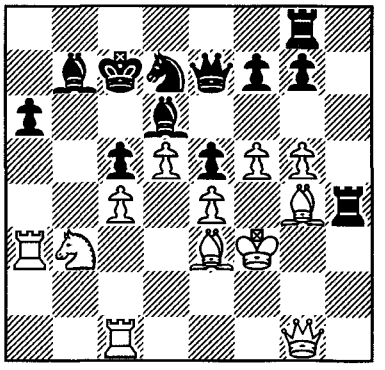
44 ♘b3

Now that this knight is paralysing Black's queenside, his resources for resisting quickly evaporate.

44...♔c7 45 ♔f3! ♘d7 46 a3! bxa3 47 ♖a2!

The planned regrouping has been carried out, and it transpires that the black king, by fleeing to the queenside, has gone from the frying pan into the fire.

47...♖h4 48 ♖xa3



48...♖gh8

Clever tactics – 48...♘f6 49 gxf6 gxf6 – do not help: 50 ♖a5! ♖gxg4 51 ♕xg4 ♖xg4 52 ♔xg4 ♕d8 53 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 54 ♖xc5+ ♔d7 55 ♖b1 ♗a8 56 ♗d2, and the white king easily hides from the checks (56...♕g8+ 57 ♔f3 ♕h8 58 ♖a5 ♕h3+ 59 ♔e2 ♕g4+ 60 ♔d3 etc.).

49 ♖b1 ♖b8

The threat of ♘a5 forces the rook to return, which signifies the failure of Black's last hopes.

50 ♕e1! ♖xg4 51 ♔xg4 ♗c8 52 ♕a5+ 1-0

If 52...♖b6, then 53 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 54 ♖xb6! is one way to win.

Then, however, Anatoly obviously became tired: after making an oversight in a good position, he lost to Portisch. Then in the 13th round, still the sole leader, he was unable to beat Kaplan, and at the finish he spared Mecking, although before the game the latter had been 'very nervous' and looked at him 'like a hunted wild animal'. Even so the result was not bad: 1-3. Karpov, Petrosian and Portisch – 10½ out of 15; 4. Gligoric – 10; 5. Keres – 9½; 6-7. Hort and Suttles – 9; 8-9. Larsen and Mecking – 8½, etc.

On the day of the concluding round Karpov met Fischer for the first time. The organisers invited the world champion to visit the tournament and, on learning that he had been delayed, they even postponed the start of the round by 15 minutes. 'Now Fischer is late not only for his own games, but also for those of others,' Petrosian remarked. 'We sat and waited. Fischer appeared together with Euwe, and then Fischer came up onto the stage and shook hands with each of the players. That is the sum total of my impressions,' writes Karpov in *Chess is my Life*, but in the book *Sestra moya Kaissa* (Caissa is my sister, 1990) he adds: 'He appeared on the last day, which was not too fortunate. The winners – and I was one of them – peacefully split the points and Fischer, who sat in the audience for no more than quarter of an hour, understood the situation and disappeared.'

It is possible that already then, at the end of 1972, not only Botvinnik, Petrosian and Tal, but also Fischer himself, after carefully observing Karpov at the board, sensed that an intervention in the battle for the chess crown would soon be made by this very 'serious boy'!

'This is not my Cycle'

While preparing for his first and, as it later transpired, his only, Interzonal tournament, Karpov played in Budapest the spring of 1973 (+4=11; 2nd place after Geller) and in an unusual match-tournament of three USSR teams, where he beat Spassky and Taimanov (+2=2) on board one.

That year, taking into account the rise in the number of strong players, FIDE for the first time divided the Interzonal stage into two separate tournaments, and from then on, in order to qualify for the Candidates, one had to finish not in the first six, but in the first three places. The division was made by rating and led to an obvious mismatch: in Petropolis, Brazil, there was only one of the six candidates from the previous cycle – Geller, whereas in Leningrad (June 1973) there were five: Korchnoi, Larsen, Hübner, Taimanov and Uhlmann. There was also the formidable Tal, who had just won five tournaments in succession, as well as the young Karpov, who was enjoying constant successes. And only three places?! However, as Tal wisely remarked, if the task of finishing in the first three proves too difficult, what is the sense in contending for the title of world champion?

Karpov set himself the audacious task of winning the Interzonal tournament (which promised a comparatively weaker opponent in the first Candidates match) or at least of occupying one of the qualifying places. Many years later, when bans were lifted, he revealed in the press that he had prepared for this tournament together with Korchnoi:

'On one occasion some friends called unexpectedly, we had a pleasant, jovial evening, and someone suggested: let's try and guess who will play in the final Candidates match, and when the final pair has been decided, we'll open the envelopes. I remember that I wrote: Spassky-Petrosian. I was sure that they were the strongest of the Candidates... I didn't put myself down, because I genuinely didn't think that it was my cycle. Firstly, I had hardly any experience of playing at this level, and secondly, I thought that for the moment my main opponents were objectively stronger than me. Of course, these forecasts were immediately forgotten by everyone, including myself. But when the final pair – Korchnoi and I – had been determined, our friend, who had kept the forecasts, came and showed them all. In only one did Korchnoi-Karpov appear, and it was written in Korchnoi's familiar hand...'

This shows enviable foresight, but first the two 'Ks' had to overcome the Interzonal barrier! In this tournament Karpov was seconded not only by Furman, but also the Muscovite Yuri Razuvaev, with whom, like Balashov, he had been acquainted since the times of the Botvinnik school. After the Student Olympiad in Puerto Rico (1971) Anatoly had asked his team colleagues to help him and Furman in the forthcoming world championship qualifying cycle. It should be said that the two Yuri Sergeevichs – Balashov and Razuvaev, now well-known grandmasters and trainers, were among the most erudite players of the young generation. Thus was born the training staff of the future world champion

'At the start, Karpov's play perhaps lacked the brilliance that distinguished Korchnoi's play,' wrote Alexander Kotov, the chief arbiter of the Leningrad Interzonal. 'His wins did not come in series, but as ones interspersed with half points. The giants did not succumb to his blows, although he claimed quite a number of victims. Karpov played slightly cautiously, did not take risks, and at times avoided unclear complications. Well, such play is a sure way of achieving success in qualifying events. But when, by the will of fate, complications arose on the board, Karpov was able to figure them out with the precision of a cybernetic machine. Here he was prepared to sacrifice, and he was not afraid of any sharpening of the position.'

In the first six rounds he won with Black against Estevez, Tukmakov and Cuellar (after parrying the opponent's fierce attack with dif-

ficulty in time-trouble), and drew with Hübner (in a tough, fascinating struggle), Korchnoi and Taimanov. At that moment the leading group looked like this: Larsen – 5½ out of 6; Byrne and Korchnoi – 5; Karpov – 4½; Kuzmin – 4. It was time to actuate the white pieces – Karpov's most dangerous weapon throughout his career!

Game 52
A.Karpov-G.Kuzmin
Interzonal Tournament,
Leningrad 1973, 7th round
French Defence C09

1 e4 e6 (to avoid being tortured in the Spanish, Gennady Kuzmin chose a defence that he rarely employed) **2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2**

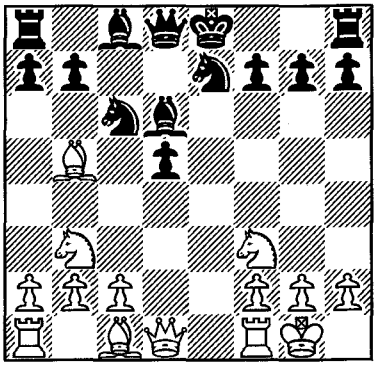
At that time this quiet Tarrasch-Geller move brought Karpov almost 100% success. But his matches with Korchnoi (1974 and 1978) showed that it is not at all easy for White to win against the position with an isolated pawn, and from 1982 Anatoly also began employing 3 ♘c3.

3...c5

Previously Kuzmin had played 3...dxe4. On this occasion he decided to improve Black's play in comparison with Karpov's games against Krogius (Kuybyshev 1970) and Vaganian (Budapest 1973). But here he was unlucky – this was his 'opponent's territory': Karpov and Furman had been engaged in solving the secrets of the 3 ♘d2 variation since the start of the 1970s.

4 exd5 exd5 5 ♘gf3 (in Baguio, Karpov switched to 5 ♗b5+) **5...♘c6** (5...a6 – *Game No.15*) **6 ♗b5 ♗d6 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 0-0 ♘ge7 9 ♘b3 ♗d6**

This move, later employed by Korchnoi, was comparatively unexplored at that time. In the aforementioned games the usual 9...♗b6 10 ♖e1 0-0 occurred, and Krogius failed to hold out after 11 ♗e3 ♗g4 12 ♗xb6 ♕xb6 (12...axb6!?) 13 ♗xc6 ♘xc6 14 ♕xd5 ♘b4 15 ♕e4 ♗xf3 16 gxf3, while Vaganian ran into 11 ♗g5! (exploiting the fact that the e7-knight's defence has been weakened) 11...h6 12 ♗h4 g5 (exposing the king; 12...♖e8!? 13 h3 a6 14 ♗d3 ♗e6 was better) 13 ♗g3 ♘f5 14 ♕d2 ♘xg3 15 hxg3 ♕f6 16 c3 ♗f5! ('an excellent pawn sacrifice', although 16...a6 17 ♗f1 ♖d8 18 ♘fd4 ♗d7 19 ♗e2 g4 was also possible) 17 ♕xd5 ♖ad8 18 ♕c4 ♗d3 19 ♕a4 ♗xb5 20 ♕xb5 g4 21 ♘fd4 ♘xd4 22 cxd4 a6 23 ♕h5 ♗xd4 24 ♕xg4+ ♕g7 25 ♕f3! (a very subtle decision, to stay in the middlegame and seek a way to attack the king) 25...♗xb2 26 ♖ad1 b6 27 ♕b7 ♖xd1 28 ♖xd1 ♕g4 29 ♖b1 ♖d8 30 ♕xa6 ♖d1+ 31 ♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 32 ♕f1 ♕c2 33 ♕b5 ♗a3 34 ♕d5!? (not objecting to the exchange of the queenside pawns) 34...♗f8 35 ♕d2 ♕e4 36 ♔h2 ♗c5 37 ♘c1 ♔g7 38 ♘d3 ♕d4 39 ♕e2 ♗d6? (39...♕c4 Karpov) 40 ♔h3! ♕d5 41 ♘f4 ♗xf4 42 gxf4, and White won this queen ending.



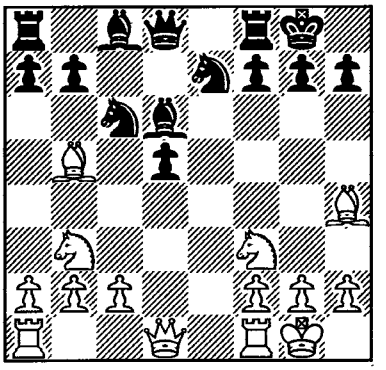
10 ♗g5!

In the Moscow match with Korchnoi (1974) 10 c3 ♗g4 11 ♘bd4 0-0 was tested several times, and only in the 18th game did Karpov revert to the energetic bishop move.

10...0-0 11 ♗h4

With the idea of ♗g3: White concedes two tempi to exchange the dark-squared bishops. Eighteen months later, in the aforementioned game with Korchnoi, the optimal arrangement of the forces was found – 11 ♖e1! (hindering the development of the queen at b6) 11...♕c7 12 c3 ♗g4 13 h3 ♗h5 14 ♗e2! h6 15 ♗xe7!

♘xe7 16 ♘fd4, and after 16...♗xe2 17 ♕xe2 a6 18 ♕f3 ♖ad8 a standard position was reached, where White has a slight but enduring advantage, but Black has the possibility of gaining a draw after a gruelling defence.



11...♕c7?!

Missing a chance to achieve a good game. This move indicates an inadequate knowledge of the subtleties of such positions: the queen stands better at b6! In analysis after the game 11...♗g4 12 ♗g3 ♗xg3 13 hxg3 ♕b6! 14 ♗d3 etc. was examined. The opponent's plan appealed to Kuzmin, and in his 13th round game with Uhlmann he improved White's play with 12 ♗e2! – as Karpov himself played six months later (*Game No.53*).

But games from the following year showed that the immediate 11...♕b6! is better, when Black has no opening problems, for example: 12 ♗d3 a5 13 a4 ♘f5! 14 ♗xf5 ♗xf5 15 ♗g3 ♗xg3 16 hxg3 ♗e4 with equality (Balashov-Gulko, Moscow 1974).

12 ♗g3 ♗xg3 13 hxg3 ♗g4

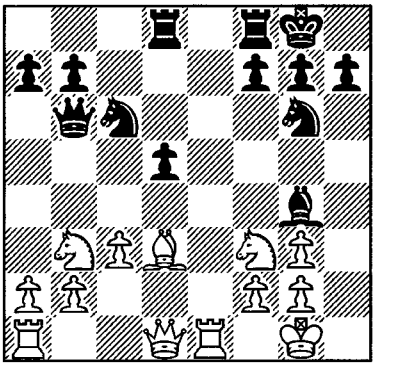
In positions with an isolated d5-pawn it is useful for Black to exchange this bishop – so that at least it should not be transformed into a 'large pawn', standing at e6.

14 ♖e1 ♖ad8 15 c3 ♕b6 (finally the queen stands where it needs to be) **16 ♗d3**

16...♘g6

Avoiding creating any weaknesses, but also not preventing the opponent from strengthening his position. With the typical manoeuvre 16...♗h5 (and if 17 ♕c2, then 17...♗g6) Black would also have retained hopes of gradually dampening White's slight initiative by accurate and patient defence.

'Of course, 16...d4 would have been answered by 17 c4,' writes Karpov. But then after 17...♘g6 White could have gradually lost his entire advantage! I think that in fact there would have followed 17 ♗xh7+! ♔h8 18 ♗d3 dxc3 19 bxc3, when Black has no compensation for the pawn (if 19...♘f5?!, then 20 ♕d2! is strong, with the idea of 20...♘xg3 21 ♕f4 or 20...♗xf3 21 gxf3 ♘xg3 22 ♔g2!).



17 ♕c2 ♗xf3 18 gxf3 ♖d6?

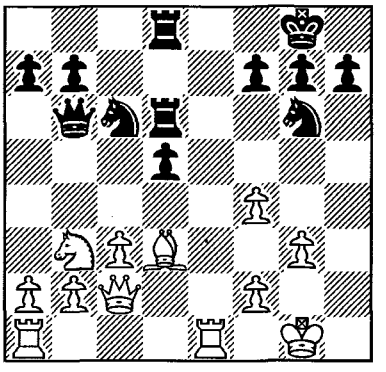
Seemingly active and consistent: by defending his knight, Black ensures the advance of his h7-pawn to h4. But if one looks ahead, it will be seen that this entire operation is simply a waste of time.

In such structures you should get rid of the isolated pawn at the first convenient opportunity, and now was precisely such a moment – 18...d4!, since 19 c4?! is unfavourable on account of 19...♘ce5! Karpov considers 19 f4 dxc3 20 bxc3 'with an interesting position, in which White's pawns restrict the black knights on both wings.' But, in my view, after 20...♖fe8 21 ♗e4 ♘f8 22 ♖e3 and ♖ae1 White's advantage is comparatively slight.

19 f4 ♖fd8

It is good to defend the 'isolani' indirectly – increasing the activity of the pieces and deploying the rooks on adjacent files. But here

both rooks are propping up the d5-pawn, which at the moment nothing is attacking! Alas, 19...d4?! is now too late on account of 20 c4, and after 20...♘b4 21 ♕d2 ♘xd3 22 ♕xd3 ♕d8 23 ♖e4 the d-pawn is lost.



20 a3!

The effect of this quiet move is equivalent to a thunder clap: Black finally loses any hope of playing ...d5-d4 and is left without counterplay. Whereas 'White's plan is clear: he will transfer his knight to f3, double rooks on the e-file, and then, according to circumstances, advance his f-pawn and his queenside pawns.' (Karpov)

20...h5?!

Black's chances are associated with play in the centre and on the queenside, but definitely not on the kingside. However, after 20...a5 21 ♘d2 and ♘f3 he would also have been a long way from equalising.

21 ♔g2 h4 22 ♖e2!

Karpov is in his element! The direct 22 ♖h1 after 22...hxg3 23 fxg3 ♖e8! would have obliged White to neutralise an invasion on the e-file. 22 ♘d2 looks quite good, with the idea of 22...h3+ 23 ♔g1! and ♘f3. But Karpov's decision is far more effective. Realising that his opponent is labouring under an illusion, he does not hurry and in the first instance does not allow him even the slightest activity. In addition, he takes control of the e-file, along which the decisive blow will be landed. It is interesting that the invasion along the h-file remained only a threat (although one that Black had to reckon with!).

22...♘f8 23 ♘d2 ♖h6 24 ♘f3 hxg3 25 fxg3 ♘d7

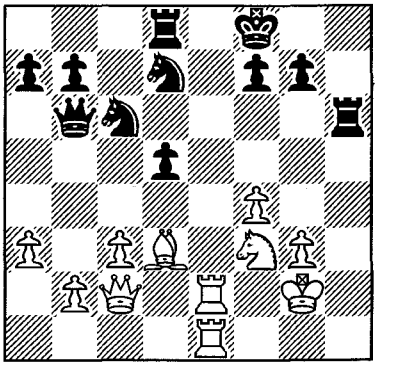
25...d4 26 c4 would not have eased Black's fate, for example: 26...♘d7 27 b4!, 26...a5 27 ♖ae1, 26...♕c5 27 f5!, or 26...♕a5 27 c5! and ♖ae1.

26 ♖ae1

The two sides have completed their planned regroupings. And it turns out that White's pressure on the e-file is very real, whereas Black's possession of the h-file does not promise anything, since his rook is unsupported. Not having found the time for activity on the queenside, Black has condemned his queen to inaction. His pieces are scattered in disorder, whereas White's forces are ready to attack the king's fortress. This is where a difference in positional understanding tells, even among grandmasters.

26...♔f8

Other moves are no better.



27 g4!

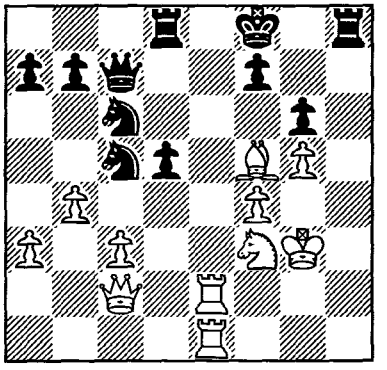
When clear-cut aims appeared, already in his youth Karpov was able to switch quickly from thinking in patterns and schemes to concrete calculation. Some of his decisions may seem unexpected (for example, the exchange of queens at the very end), but it is all calculated with exceptional accuracy.

27...♕c7

Black has nothing on which to base any

counterplay, and his position is hopeless: 27...♘c5 (27...g6?! 28 g5 and ♗xg6!) 28 ♗f5! ♕b3 (28...♕c7 29 g5 ♖h8 30 ♔g3, as in the game) 29 ♕xb3 ♘xb3 30 ♗d7! f6 31 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 32 ♖xe8+ ♔f7 33 g5 or 30...g6 31 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 32 ♖xe8+ ♔g7 33 ♗xc6 bxc6 34 ♖e7 and wins.

28 g5 ♖h8 29 ♔g3! ♘c5 30 ♗f5 g6 31 b4!



31...♘e4+

After 31...gxf5 (31...♘d7 32 ♗xg6!) 32 bxc5 the black king is unable to escape: 32...d4 33 ♖h2! ♖g8 34 ♕xf5 with the threats of ♖h7 and ♕f6, and queen moves are no better – 32...♕a5 33 ♖e3! and ♕xf5, 32...♕c8 33 ♖h2 ♖g8 34 ♖h7!, or 32...♕d7 33 ♖h2 ♖g8 34 ♖h6!

32 ♗xe4 dxe4 33 ♕xe4 ♔g7 34 b5 ♘a5 35 ♕e7! ♕xe7

In the event of 35...♕xc3 (with the faint hope of 36 ♖e5?? ♖h3+!) White wins by 36 ♖e3! ♕b2 37 ♖b1! ♕xb1 38 ♕f6+ ♔g8 39 ♕xd8+ and ♕xa5 with an extra piece, or 36...♕c8 37 ♖e6! ♔g8 38 ♖xg6+! fxg6 39 ♖e6 with crushing threats.

36 ♖xe7 ♖d3 37 ♖c7 ♘b3 38 ♔g4 ♖f8 39 ♖ee7 1-0

The invasion of the knight at e5 is unavoidable. A model of strategic planning, based on an assessment of the genuinely significant features of the position.

The next day Karpov faced a difficult test – 'Spanish torture' in his game with Tal, who was eager to make amends for his extremely poor start (the ex-world champion was unwell, but he categorically rejected all suggestions by the doctors to withdraw from the tournament). The adjourned position – two rooks and a passed a-pawn against rook, bishop and knight, plus three pawns each on the kingside – looked dangerous for Black, but he was able to save it on the resumption. Anatoly promptly pointed out the strongest move for White, found in his sleep(!), which, however, was also insufficient to win. After this game the American master Zuckerman, Byrne's second and a friend of Fischer, declared: 'If Karpov can save such positions, it's altogether impossible to win against him!' But in the words of Karpov, his main rival Korchnoi 'reproached Tal, without foundation, for not wanting to win a superior adjourned position...'

Then Karpov crushed Quinteros (one of the five 'best game' prizes) and, having scored 7 out of 9, moved into second place. A point ahead of him was Korchnoi, who had just defeated Larsen (*Game No.20*) and Byrne. But he only needed to stumble in the 12th round, and Karpov, after beating Uhlmann in a difficult struggle, caught up with him! In the 13th round the young grandmaster won another 'Spanish duel' against Gligoric, but Korchnoi also won. In the 14th round Korchnoi drew with Smejkal, who had now warmed up, but Karpov defeated Rukavina and for the first time became the sole leader – 11 out of 14! 'The round-by-round movements of Korchnoi and Karpov resemble a cycle race, when two racers are ahead for the whole distance and at the same time change places, handing each other the lead in turn.' (Kotov)

In the 15th round it was Karpov's turn to draw – and again there were two leaders! Two rounds before the finish the battle for a place in the cherished three had become extremely sharp: Karpov and Korchnoi had 11½ points, Byrne – 11 and Smejkal – 10½. In the 16th round Korchnoi and Byrne won their games,

while Karpov had Black against Smejkal, who had staggered the public with a series of seven wins in the middle of the tournament. An anxious, nervy encounter! Smejkal had a dangerous initiative, but he spent too much time in thought and in severe time-trouble he first lost his advantage, and then on the 39th move he blundered a pawn. On the resumption Karpov methodically exploited another error by his distressed opponent and won a memorable endgame with queen and opposite-coloured bishops.

The question of the leading trio was decided: Karpov, Korchnoi and Byrne, who was half a point behind (a major triumph for the 45-year-old American grandmaster!). But who would take first place? In the last round Byrne agreed a 13-move draw with Uhlmann, and now it was all in the hands of the two 'Ks'. Both had White: Karpov against the Filipino Torre, and Korchnoi against Hübner.

Before the games Anatoly received a proposal from his rival that both games should be agreed drawn and that first place should be 'rightly' shared. 'I, of course, rejected this "Korchnoi variation", which considerably angered him,' Karpov recalls. 'The proposal was unpleasant for me: in our country such "tricks" are vigorously condemned. I won quickly against Torre and went off to analyse with him. Later Korchnoi arrived and loudly (for everyone) and maliciously (for me) announced: "Well, I was forced to win against Hübner." Now I realise: he and I would have become enemies much sooner, if he had not won that last game in the Interzonal.'

The outcome of the gripping Leningrad race was as follows: 1-2. Karpov and Korchnoi – 13½ out of 17; 3. Byrne – 12½; 4. Smejkal – 11; 5-6. Hübner and Larsen – 10; 7. Kuzmin – 9½; 8-10. Gligoric, Taimanov and Tal – 8½, etc. Incidentally, Karpov nevertheless achieved his highest aim: in the autumn, at the drawing of lots for the Candidates matches, he was arbitrarily awarded first place in the Interzonal, thanks to which he avoided a quarter-final meeting with Spassky or Petrosian and was given Polugayevsky as his opponent. But Korchnoi too did not complain of his fate, being paired against Mecking, the winner of the other Interzonal tournament in Brazil.

It is amusing that Mecking announced that summer: 'Only Karpov and I can take the title of world champion from Fischer!' On learning of this, Karpov thought: 'Indeed, it wouldn't be bad to meet Mecking in the final Candidates match... But this was improbable. I thought that we were both still rather too inexperienced to get through to the final match. All the major international tournaments that I had played up till then could be counted on the fingers of one hand, and this, of course, was very little to be a real contender for the title of world champion. It was more realistic to pin my hopes on the next three-year cycle. This is why I said to journalists: "This is not my cycle." '

At that time Korchnoi also gave a forecast of the forthcoming events at the chess summit, which as usual was very interesting from the professional point of view:

'It is unlikely that I will be able to win the Candidates event. Among my rivals there are some "awkward" opponents. In general I think that the generation defeated by Fischer can no longer successfully oppose him. This is a task for the young. Can Karpov cope with it? I don't know. Karpov's last few appearances have shown that, as a tournament fighter, he is not inferior to Fischer... Karpov is improving from one tournament to the next. In one of my statements I said that in this cycle no one would be able to win against Fischer. For this Karpov has as yet insufficient experience and knowledge. Perhaps he believed me and therefore he stated that this is "not his cycle"? But in the Interzonal tournament he fought for the highest place and played more maturely than previously. Karpov is becoming a great tournament fighter, taking risks when necessary, and capable of playing

for a win in every game. At the same time he is very practical and does not make any bad mistakes. His play now resembles that of Spassky in his best years – composure in every encounter, evenness in all stages of the game, and a lack of obvious errors.'

Literally a week after the tournament, Korchnoi and Karpov were already playing for the USSR team in the European Team Championship (Bath, July 1973), where Anatoly scored the best result on board four (+4=2). The next test was the 41st USSR Championship (Moscow, October 1973), the strongest for many years: 1. Spassky – 11½ out of 17; 2-6. Karpov, Korchnoi, Kuzmin, Petrosian and Polugayevsky – 10½; behind them Geller, Keres, Taimanov, Tal, Tukmakov, Smyslov etc.

'For the first time I set my sights on the title of USSR Champion: my consistent and good results had given me the right to such an aim,' Karpov recalls. 'But I was prevented from taking first place by a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, I wanted to win the championship, but on the other hand it was impossible to "open up" completely, since looming ahead was the quarter-final Candidates match with Polugayevsky. It was necessary to economise on my strength and my openings.'

This was Tal's opinion: 'Karpov made this tournament into a kind of training ground. The young grandmaster has frequently been reproached for his insufficiently broad opening repertoire (similar claims were made about Fischer in 1970-71). I think that in a number of games in this championship the Leningrad grandmaster deliberately went in for unfamiliar set-ups, trying to master them, so to speak, while in motion, and this was the direction he pursued, endeavouring not to be diverted from his set program.'

And another important observation by Karpov: 'By, contrast, Spassky peddled furiously. He played flat-out, not saving any theoretical discoveries for the Candidates matches, and generously revealing his plans in a number of variations, admitting that before the Candidates matches he had to experience his strength. But I think that Spassky's victory in the championship was not really so convincing and promising for him. The ex-world champion had a losing position against me, he could have lost by force to Korchnoi, and he had a difficult position against Kuzmin... Had he lost to any of us, the winner would have shared first place with him.' An uncommonly sober assessment of the play of a dangerous future opponent, whose triumph in the national championship provoked general admiration!

The last stage of his preparations for the match with Polugayevsky was a tournament in Madrid (November-December 1973), where Anatoly played together with Furman: 'Botvinnik was against me making this journey. He thought that the better I performed in Madrid, the worse things would be for me in the Candidates matches. I was of a different opinion. And I wasn't mistaken.'

The young challenger started with 2½ out of 3 (wins over Pomar and Andersson), but then made a series of draws: 'I played, so to speak, on technique, without especially giving my all'. Four rounds before the finish the sole lead has been assumed by Uhlmann – 8½ out of 11, and behind him were Karpov, Furman, Tukmakov and Hort on 7½. In this situation there is no need to explain the competitive importance of the following game with the experienced German grandmaster.

Game 53
A.Karpov-W.Uhlmann
Madrid 1973, 12th round
French Defence C09

1 e4 e6 (of course: Uhlmann is one of the greatest experts on the French Defence) **2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5**

By present-day standards, it is hard for White to play for a win in this variation. And

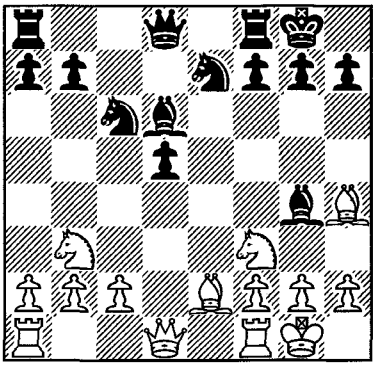
even Karpov, for all his amazing skill in accumulating small pluses and transforming them into a more substantial advantage, would hardly have achieved such successes without the 'help' of his opponents. But these mistakes, as in the present game, were sometimes so imperceptible, that it was possible to find them only after a scrupulous analysis.

5 ♘gf3 ♘c6 6 ♗b5 ♗d6 7 dxc5 ♗xc5 8 0-0 ♘ge7 9 ♘b3 ♗d6 10 ♗g5 0-0 11 ♗h4

The time for 11 ♖e1! (Karpov-Korchnoi, 18th matchgame, Moscow 1974) had not yet come.

11...♗g4 (as already mentioned, 11...♕b6! is better, but not 11...♕c7?! – *Game No.52*) **12 ♗e2!**

An excellent idea of Gennady Kuzmin.



12...♗h5

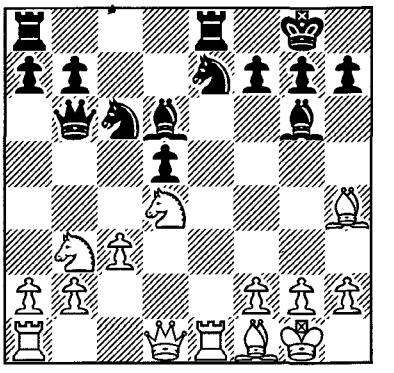
An attempt to improve Black's play compared with the game Kuzmin-Uhlmann (Leningrad Interzonal 1973), which went 12...♕b6 13 ♗xe7! (an unpleasant surprise: over his reply Black thought for an hour and twenty minutes!) 13...♘xe7 (after 13...♗xe7 14 ♕xd5 it is not easy to find worthwhile compensation for the pawn) 14 ♕d4 ♕xd4 15 ♘fxd4 ♗d7 (15...♗xe2 16 ♘xe2 is no better) 16 ♖ad1 ♖fd8 17 ♖fe1 ♔f8 18 c3 a5?! 19 a3 a4 20 ♘a1! ♘c8 21 ♘ac2 ♘b6 22 ♘e3 ♗f4 23 ♘dc2 ♗e6 24 ♖d4! ♗xe3 25 ♘xe3 ♘c4 26 ♖ed1! ♖dc8 27 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 28 ♖xd5 ♘xb2 29 ♖b1 ♘c4 30 ♖xb7 ♘a5 (30...♘xa3? 31 ♖dd7) 31 ♖bb5, and White converted his extra pawn.

But Karpov also parries Uhlmann's new move. In the end it was these failures by Black that induced him to seek new ways of defending against 11 ♗h4.

13 ♖e1 ♕b6 14 ♘fd4

'After releasing his knight at e7 from the pin, Black was intending to use it to attack the bishop at h4, and so White needs to control the f5-square.' (Karpov)

14...♗g6 (to establish control over the central squares) **15 c3 ♖fe8 16 ♗f1**



16...♗e4

Vacating the g6-square for the manoeuvre ...♘g6-e5. Going into the endgame by 16...♘xd4 17 ♕xd4 ♘f5 18 ♕xb6 axb6 19 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 would not have given full equality in view of 20 ♗b5! ♖a8 (20...♖e5?! 21 ♗d8) 21 ♗g3! (not 21 ♗g5 h6 22 ♗d2 ♗e5 with equality) 21...♗xg3 (or 21...♘xg3 22 hxg3) 22 hxg3 ♘d6 23 ♘d4, and in view of the weakness of his pawns, Black's position is somewhat worse.

17 ♗g3 ♗xg3 18 hxg3 a5?!

'Uhlmann must have underestimated the dangers facing him, otherwise he would have restricted himself to the simple 18...♖ad8,' (Karpov), for example: 19 a4 ♘xd4 20 ♘xd4 a6 etc.

19 a4!

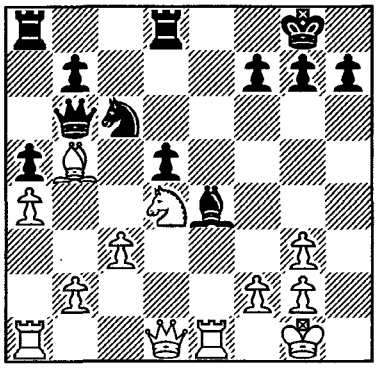
The b5-square becomes an important strong point for the white pieces, and Karpov

makes uncommonly effective use of this outpost.

19...♘xd4 20 ♘xd4! (the only possibility of playing for an advantage) **20...♘c6**

20...♕xb2? is not possible on account of 21 ♘b5, with two unpleasant threats – ♘c7 and ♖e2! Black is forced to allow the activation of the knight at b3, and his entire strategy, based on the restraining role of the queen at b6, proves worthless.

21 ♗b5 ♖ed8



22 g4!

The aim of this advance does not immediately become clear. White is not thinking about an attack – he is preparing for the endgame!

'Such moves afford me the greatest satisfaction: White succeeds in seeing into the future. And in the immediate future the game transposes into a double-rook ending with light-squared bishops. The mobility of the black bishop is restricted by its own pawn at d5, and now my pawn at g4 will cramp it still further. It may be objected: but you are placing a pawn on a square of the colour of your own bishop! This is indeed so, but my bishop is working along different diagonals.' (Karpov)

22...♘xd4?

Karpov's judgement, which is of methodological value, could have encountered serious counter-arguments, if Black had not hurried with exchanges, but followed Karpov's own recommendation: 'The preparatory 22...♖ac8 would have been technically better.'

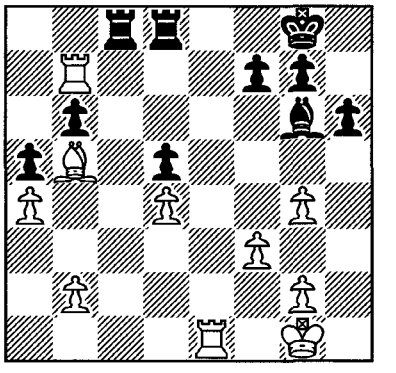
It would appear that in this way he could have maintained approximate equality: 23 ♘f5 (23 f3 ♗g6) 23...♗xf5 24 gxf5 d4! 25 ♕g4 ♘a7 26 ♗f1 ♕f6, or 23 ♖c1 ♘xd4 24 ♕xd4 ♕xd4 25 cxd4 ♔f8 with good drawing chances.

23 ♕xd4! ♕xd4 24 cxd4 ♖ac8 25 f3 ♗g6 26 ♖e7! b6

According to Karpov, 'It was probably time to decide on active measures with 26...♖c2.' However, after 27 ♖ae1! (not immediately 27 ♖xb7 ♖xb2 28 ♖a7 ♖d2 29 ♖xa5 ♖xd4 30 ♖a7 ♖b4 with a probable draw) 27...h6 28 ♖xb7! ♖xb2 29 ♖ee7 Black would have faced a difficult defence: 29...♖c8!? (29...♖d2 30 ♗e8!, while if 29...♖b4, then 30 f4 is unpleasant) 30 ♔h2! ♖cc2 31 ♔g3 ♖xg2+ 32 ♔f4 ♔h7 33 ♖bd7 and ♖xd5, retaining the advantage.

27 ♖ae1 h6 28 ♖b7

White is threatening to invade the 7th rank with his second rook and to begin pursuing the king.



28...♖d6?

Practically shutting the rook out of the game – and this is sufficient for Karpov to win. He does not fear the invasion of the other rook: on its own, or even with the support of the bishop, it can only give a few checks, pick up a couple of pawns, whereas the united pair of white rooks will weave a mating net.

'If now 28...♖c2, then very unpleasant for

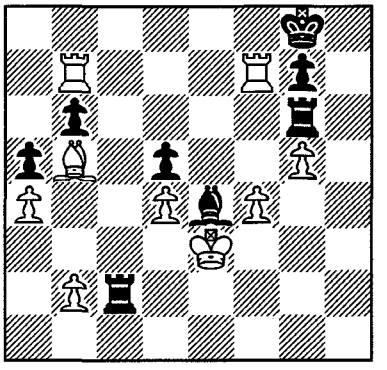
Black is 29 ♖e2 ♖xe2 30 ♗xe2 ♖d6 31 ♗b5 followed by the advance of White's king to the centre, which enables him to achieve domination despite the limited material.' (Karpov). But it seems to me that this variation would leave Black real saving chances: 31...♔f8 32 ♔f2 ♗c2 33 ♖c7 ♗h7 34 ♔e3 g5!, blocking the king's path to the centre. It is not apparent how White can breach this fortress.

I should add that after the only move 28...♖c2! Black would also have retained defensive resources in the event of 29 ♖xb6 ♖xb2 30 ♖a6 ♖d2 31 ♖xa5 ♖xd4, or 29 ♖ee7 ♖xb2 30 ♗e8 ♖d6! 31 f4 ♗e4 32 ♗xf7+ ♔h7 (for example, 33 ♗h5 ♖c6! 34 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 35 ♖gc7 ♖xc7 36 ♖xc7 ♖xg2+ 37 ♔f1 ♖a2 38 ♖c6 ♖xa4 39 ♖xh6+ ♔g7 40 ♖xb6 ♖xd4 etc.).

29 ♖ee7 h5

29...♖c2 was now too late in view of 30 ♖b8+ ♔h7 31 ♖ee8 ♖c1+ 32 ♔h2 ♗b1 33 f4 ♗e4? 34 f5 g6 35 f6! g5 36 ♖g8! ♖xf6 37 ♖h8+ ♔g7 38 ♖bg8 mate. 'Black could have avoided all this "brilliancy" only by 33...♔g6, which would have forced me also to operate more prosaically.' (Karpov). That is, 34 ♖e7! (with the threat of ♖bb7 or ♖f8) 34...♖f6 35 ♔g3 ♖d1 (35...h5 36 gxh5+ ♔xh5 37 ♖e5+ and ♖xd5) 36 f5+ ♔g5 37 ♖g8 g6 38 ♖xf7! ♖xd4 39 ♗e2, and Black's days are numbered.

30 gxh5 ♗xh5 31 g4! ♗g6 32 f4 ♖c1+ 33 ♔f2 ♖c2+ 34 ♔e3 ♗e4 (34...♖e6+ 35 ♖xe6 fxe6 36 ♖xb6 is also bad for Black) **35 ♖xf7 ♖g6 36 g5**



One black rook is rushing about uselessly in the enemy position, while the other is still out of play... The rest is clear without words.

36...♔h7 37 ♖fe7 ♖xb2 38 ♗e8! ♖b3+ 39 ♔e2 ♖b2+ 40 ♔e1! ♖d6 (40...♖b1+ 41 ♔d2 ♖b2+ 42 ♔c3 ♖c2+ 43 ♔b3 Karpov) **41 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 42 ♖ge7 1-0**

Or 42 ♖gf7 ♔g8 43 f5. Black resigned, since the only way to avoid mate was by the hopeless 42...♖b1+ 43 ♔f2 ♖b2+ 44 ♔g3 ♖g2+ 45 ♔h3 ♖e2 46 ♗b5! ♗f5+ 47 ♔g3 ♖xe7 48 ♖xe7 etc.

An excellent finish – 3½ out of 4, including a win with Black in the last round, enabled the 22-year-old Soviet grandmaster to become the sole winner for the first time of a major international tournament: 1. Karpov – 11 out of 15; 2. Tukmakov – 10½; 3. Furman – 10; 4-5. Hort and Uhlmann – 9½; 6-7. Andersson and Portisch – 9, etc. At the closing ceremony, together with the first prize he also received his first chess 'Oscar'. Symptomatic, wouldn't you agree? Before that the 'Oscar' had been won only by Spassky (1968 and 1969) and Fischer (1970, 1971 and 1972).

Of course, Fischer continued to observe the rise of the new star with unremitting attention, studying the style and habits of his potential opponent. Highly eloquent is the testimony of Tal, who together with Karpov gave simultaneous displays at the world youth and students' festival in Berlin in the summer of 1973:

'After one of the displays the organisers drew our attention to a youthful-looking woman, who all the time had been beside Karpov's boards with a camera in her hands. It turned out to be the mother of Robert Fischer. At the request of her son, she had taken a few photographs. The world champion wanted to get to know Karpov a little better, since he thought that he would be his opponent in the 1975 world championship match. I have to admit that at the time I found this hard to believe, but Fischer proved more far-sighted...'

Duel of the Debutants

Karpov's first opponent in the Candidates matches – the 39-year-old Lev Polugayevsky, twice USSR Champion and the winner of many international tournaments – was also making his debut in competitions at such a high level. However, in contrast to Karpov, he did have some match experience: two matches for the title of USSR Champion (with Alexander Zaitsev and Petrosian) and the clash with Hort in the 'Match of the Century'. Even so, according to Tal, most of the experts predicted victory for the younger contestant, but... after a very tough struggle.

Polugayevsky himself rated his own chances rather modestly, but he prepared with all his might: 'I was not particularly happy about the opponent who had "fallen" to me. Although Karpov had said that it was not yet "his" Candidates cycle, his amazing successes and his enormous talent, gathering strength with every day, demonstrated that in the chess world he was an exceptional phenomenon. Perhaps it was for this reason that my attitude to the match was excessively serious. Leaving myself practically no time for relaxation, I devoted all my time to opening preparation. (Later I endeavoured to avoid this mistake.) I knew that Karpov never declined a theoretical duel, since he believed in himself, his analysis, and his ability to solve the most unexpected problems at the board. And I decided to spring a surprise on him: as Black to play "my" Sicilian schemes, but as White – instead of my favourite 1 c4 to switch to 1 d4, and to battle in the main variation of the Nimzo-Indian Defence, which was firmly established in Karpov's repertoire.'

A curious touch: 'When Polugayevsky was preparing for the match with Karpov he looked through about 250 of his games, and found much in common between Karpov and Fischer. In the opening they both play "straight chess". What did Polugayevsky imply by this definition? Both Fischer and Karpov are ready to engage in a critical theoretical dispute, since they believe in the correctness of their opening approach – they usually employ only continuations that have been carefully considered and analysed in variations selected beforehand. At the same time the technique of Fischer and Karpov is exceptionally fine, and it is hard to find flaws in it, although they probably play more quickly than all the other strongest grandmasters.' (Roshal)

Karpov also had his match strategy: 'In Furman's opinion, before the match with Polugayevsky I already had a sufficiently deep, although perhaps not particularly extensive knowledge of the openings. Our "plan of campaign" was briefly as follows: Polugayevsky likes positions of a calculating nature – don't allow him to obtain them on the board. The narrowness of the opponent's opening repertoire simplified our task.'

As a result, in this match – uniquely of all the quarter-finals – the theoretical discussion took place in only two variations: a popular line of the Najdorf Variation in the Sicilian (6 ♗e2 e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e7 8 0-0 ♗e6 9 f4 ♕c7 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♔h1) and the Nimzo-Indian Defence (4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 c5 6 ♘f3 d5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♗xc4 ♘c6 9 a3 ♗a5). And although familiar middlegame positions arose, serious thought by the two players, sometimes leading to dubious decisions, began already in the opening. Well, this was the pre-computer era, when home analysis of the early middlegame, with rare outstanding exceptions, was largely of an illustrative character. Nevertheless, this 'heavyweight battle' enabled a number of typical positions in the Sicilian Defence to be looked at anew and made a valuable contribution to its theory.

In the early stages of the match (Moscow, January-February 1974) there was a difficult, equal struggle: the first three games ended in draws. By the new FIDE rules, adopted under the influence of Fischer, they now played to a definite number of wins; in the quarter-final – to three (but not more than 16 games).

Botvinnik: 'At first, Karpov did not appre-

ciate where his opponent's weaknesses were. But he employed one of the strongest features of his nature – his self-education program, and he reorganised himself. The point is that Polugayevsky is strong when he knows what has to be done. But when the plan is not clear, and the game drags out, Polugayevsky is weaker. After the 4th game Karpov gained in confidence.'

Game 54
A.Karpov-L.Polugayevsky
Candidates Match,
Moscow 1974, 4th game
Sicilian Defence B92

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2

Karpov's favourite move. 'This quiet continuation seems to me to be one of the most solid replies to the Najdorf Variation. It normally requires Black to take independent positional decisions at the board, whereas in sharp variations the two sides act for a long time in accordance with the prescriptions of others, and even for a skilled player it can be difficult to work things out, when home analysis comes to an end.'

6...e5

In my matches with Karpov (1984/85 and 1985) and Anand (1995) the only topic of discussion was the flexible Scheveningen Variation, arising after 6...e6 (see Volume 7).

7 ♘b3 ♗e7 8 0-0 ♗e6

First 8...0-0 is slightly more accurate, and if 9 ♗e3, only now 9...♗e6!, but not 9...♕c7?! (Geller-Fischer, Curaçao Candidates 1962, 2nd round). The notes to this game also describe the subtleties of the entire variation (cf. *Volume 2, Game No.98*).

9 f4 ♕c7 10 a4

Later various moves were employed against me: 10 f5 ♗c4 11 ♗g5 (Oll, Moscow Olympiad 1994), 10 ♘d5 (Anand, Linares 2000), and the most aggressive 10 g4!? (Ye Jiangchuan, Batumi rapidplay 2001).

10...♘bd7 11 ♔h1!?

Geller's new move. As in the 2nd game, White avoids the traditional 11 f5 ♗c4 and what was once the main continuation, but now is no longer topical: 12 ♗e3 0-0 13 a5 b5! 14 axb6 ♘xb6 (*Volume 4, Game No.70*), as well as the unsuccessful attempt 12 a5 0-0 13 ♗g5 ♖fc8 14 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 with equality (Karpov-Gheorghiu, Moscow 1971).

11...0-0

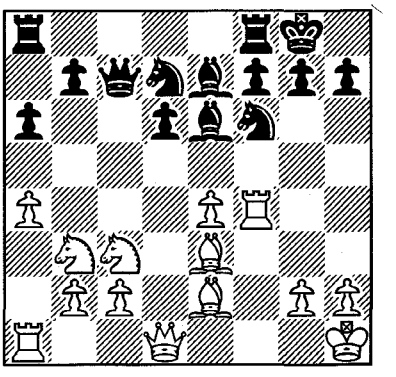
Of course, not 11...♖c8?! 12 f5 ♗c4 13 a5 0-0 14 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 15 ♖a4! ♕c6 16 ♗e3 with a bind (Geller-Ivkov, Hilversum 1973), since after 16...b5? 17 axb6 the a6-pawn is en prise.

12 ♗e3

At that time the bold thrust 12 g4!? had not occurred to anyone – apparently it was first played in the game Korsunsky-Kasparov (Baku 1976).

In addition, it was not yet too late to play 12 f5 ♗c4 and now either 13 a5 with the idea of 13...b5 14 axb6 ♘xb6 15 ♗g5 – although then 15...d5!? is not bad, or, even earlier, 13...♗b5!? 14 ♘xb5 axb5 15 ♗g5 b4 16 ♗d3 ♘c5 (Ivkov-Mecking, Petropolis Interzonal 1973), or 13 ♗g5 ♖fc8 14 a5 h6, transposing into a position from the Oll-Kasparov game (for more details – cf. *Volume 4, Game No.70*, note to White's 12th move).

12...exf4 13 ♖xf4



13...♘e5!?

A novelty. The 2nd game went 13...♖fe8 14 ♘d4 (14 a5 is questionable: 14...♗xb3 15 cxb3

d5! 16 exd5 ♗c5! Tringov-Browne, Nice Olympiad 1974) 14...♘e5 15 ♘f5 ♘g6 16 ♖f1 ♗f8 17 ♕d4 (17 ♗d4 was also recommended, but after 17...♘e5 Black is alright), and it was generally considered that White gained a positional advantage.

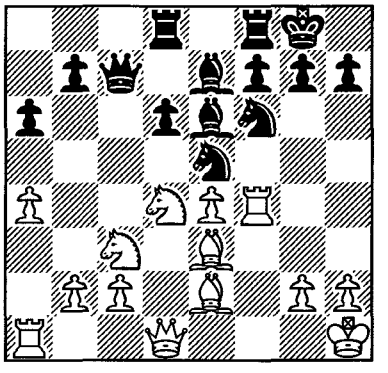
However, Polugayevsky, Botvinnik and other commentators overlooked the typical counter 17...d5!, which gives Black a good game: 18 ♘xd5 (18 ♘h6+ gxh6 19 ♕xf6 ♗g7 or 19 ♖xf6 dxe4 is worse for White) 18...♘xd5 19 exd5 ♗xf5 20 ♖xf5 ♕e7 21 ♖f3 ♘h4 22 ♖h3 ♘f5 23 ♕d3 g6, or 18 exd5 ♗xf5 19 ♖xf5 ♗d6! 20 ♗g5 ♗e5 21 ♕c4 ♕b6 etc.

14 ♘d4

14 a5! is more accurate (*Game Nos.56 and 57*), but not 14 ♘d5 ♗xd5 15 exd5 ♘fd7 16 ♖b4 ♖fe8 17 a5 ♗f6 with equality (Hulak-Portisch, Indonesia 1983).

14...♖ad8!

An idea which involves an original arrangement of the forces. The standard 14...♖ac8 is also suitable, for example: 15 ♘f5 ♗xf5 16 exf5 d5! 17 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 18 ♕xd5 ♖fd8 19 ♕e4 ♖e8 with adequate counterplay (R.Byrne-Portisch, Las Palmas 1976).



15 ♕g1?!

The first comparatively long think (10 minutes) produces not the best reaction to the novelty – Karpov himself has spoken many times about the need to choose carefully a post for the queen, but here he voluntarily places it in a corner.

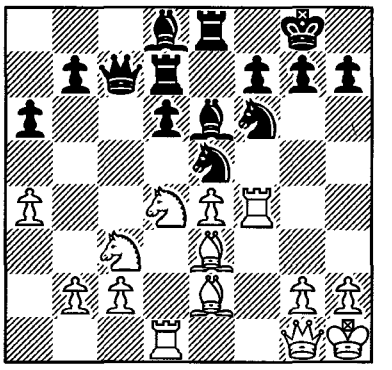
Little is also promised by 15 ♘f5 ♗xf5 16 ♖xf5 ♕c8! 17 ♕f1 ♕e6 18 ♖d1 ♖c8 19 ♗d4 ♗d8! (Adorjan-Portisch, Hungarian Championship 1975). The most advisable move was the one recommended by many commentators: 15 a5 (with the same threat of ♘xe6 and ♗b6), although after 15...♖d7 16 ♘f5 ♗d8 17 ♘d5 ♘xd5 18 exd5 ♗xf5 19 ♖xf5 (Botvinnik) 19...♖e8 there is no question of any advantage for White.

15...♖d7 16 ♖d1 ♖e8 17 ♘f5?! (it was safer to play 17 ♘xe6 fxe6 18 ♗b6 ♕c6 19 ♕e3 ♗d8 with equality) **17...♗d8!**

This is the set-up devised by Polugayevsky: he has everything defended, and there is nothing for White to attack!

18 ♘d4

After 25 minutes' thought Karpov admits that his previous move was pointless. If 18 ♗d4 there would have followed the freeing 18...d5! 19 exd5 ♘xd5 20 ♘xd5 ♗xd5 with the initiative for Black.



18...♘g6?!

Missing an excellent chance to emphasise the uncertainty of White's play in the opening –18...♗c4! (Polugayevsky), and after ...d6-d5 it transpires that Black is far better prepared for the opening of the centre.

19 ♖ff1 ♘e5 (played after almost 20 minutes' hesitation) **20 ♗f4!?**

Karpov promptly exploits his opponent's indecision, opening a path for his queen.

Polugayevsky suggested the prophylactic 20 h3!? (depriving Black of the g4-square), but here too after 20...♕c8 or 20...♗c4 the chances are equal.

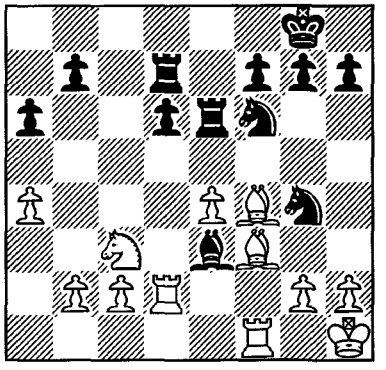
20...♕c5

Inviting the opponent to go into a roughly equal ending. 20...♕a5 (Polugayevsky) or 20...♗c4!? would have led to more complicated play.

21 ♘xe6 ♕xg1+ 22 ♖xg1 ♖xe6 23 ♗f3

Firmly defending the weakness at e4, even at the cost of transforming his bishop into a 'large pawn'! After 23 ♖gf1!? Black had a choice between the quiet 23...h6 and the immediate attack on the e4-pawn by 23...♘g6 (but not immediately 23...♗a5?! on account of 24 ♘d5! ♘xe4? 25 b4! ♗d8 26 ♗xe5 and ♗g4) 24 ♗g3 ♗a5 (threatening ...♗xc3) 25 ♘d5 ♖xe4 26 ♗d3 ♘xd5! 27 ♗xe4 ♘e3, gaining a draw.

23...♘eg4 24 ♖gf1 ♗b6 25 ♖d2 ♗e3 (25...♗a5!? would also have secured comfortable equality)



26 ♗xe3?

Playing with fire! Karpov does not want to exchange his 'stupid' bishop, as though anticipating that it may yet distinguish itself! After 26 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 27 ♗xe3 ♘xe3 28 ♖f3 ♘c4 29 ♖d4! ♘e5 (not 29...♘xb2? 30 ♘d5, and the black knight is trapped) complete calm would have descended on the board and peace could have been concluded.

According to eye-witnesses, many of the experts in the press centre were puzzled as to why, after his insipidly played opening, Karpov avoided opportunities to force a draw, and only Balashov, who knew him well, calmly remarked: 'What does he want with a draw? For a long time now he's been playing for a win.' Obviously, in the given instance the grandmaster was evaluating not the position (it is now clearly more promising for Black), but the psychological mood of the two opponents.

26...♘xe3 27 ♖b1 ♔f8

This obvious move was made quickly. The sharper 27...g5!? also came into consideration (Polugayevsky).

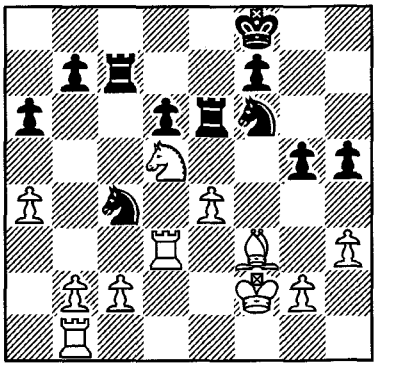
28 ♔g1 ♖c7 29 ♔f2

Polugayevsky's recommendation 29 ♖e2 ♘c4 30 ♘d1 is inadequate on account of 30...d5 (Botvinnik) 31 exd5 ♖xe2 32 ♗xe2 ♘xd5 or, even more unpleasant, 30...g5! 31 ♘f2 h5.

29...♘c4 30 ♖d3 g5!

Finally deciding to display some activity. 'Many thought that the manoeuvre ...♖e5-c5 would have given Black good winning chances. Nevertheless, it would seem that after 30...♖e5 31 b3! ♘a3 32 ♖b2! ♖ec5 33 ♘e2 White could have drawn.' (Botvinnik). That is, 33...♘xc2 34 ♖xd6 ♔e7 35 ♖d1 etc.

31 h3 h5 32 ♘d5



Here Polugayevsky was already in time-trouble and such was his emotional state that he contrived, without leaving a single piece or

pawn en prise, to lose this excellent position within eight moves!

32...♘xd5

The start of the turning point. Black dreams of creating a fortress, not even thinking about winning. 32...♖c5! was stronger (32...♖c6!? was also not bad), and according to Botvinnik it would have 'kept a slight advantage', but in my opinion it would also have given chances of more: 33 ♘xf6?! ♖xf6 34 ♔g3 (34 ♔e2? ♘e5) 34...h4+ 35 ♔f2 ♘b6! winning a pawn (Polugayevsky), or 33 b4 ♖c8 34 ♔g1! (34 ♖c3? g4 and wins) 34...♘e5 35 ♖c3 ♖xc3 36 ♘xc3 ♖e8! 37 ♗e2 ♖c8 38 ♖b3 ♘c6!? (apparently, not the only way) 39 ♗d3 ♘d4 40 ♖a3 ♘d7, and White faces an unpleasant defence.

33 ♖xd5! ♘e5?

The first step towards the abyss. After 33...♖f6! Black would still have retained the advantage: 34 ♖xg5 (34 ♔g1 ♘e5) 34...♘d2 35 ♖e1 ♖xc2 36 ♔g3 h4+! 37 ♔g4 ♖xb2, or 34 ♖f5 ♖xf5 35 exf5 ♘d2 36 ♖d1 (36 ♖c1 ♘xf3 37 ♔xf3 ♖c4!) 36...♘xf3 37 ♔xf3 ♖xc2 38 ♖xd6 ♖xb2, and White has to try and gain a draw in a rook endgame where he is a pawn down (39 f6 ♔e8 40 ♖d5 ♖b6 41 ♖xg5 ♖xf6+ 42 ♔e4 ♖g6 43 ♖xh5 ♖xg2 etc.).

34 c3 h4

Another tiny concession. 34...♖f6 (Polugayevsky) 35 ♔e3 g4 36 ♗e2 ♔e7 was better, with equality.

35 ♖bd1 ♔e7 36 ♖1d4!

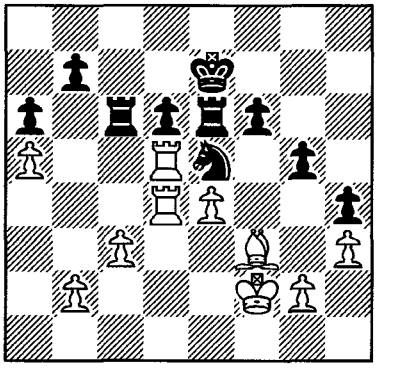
White strengthens the placing of his pieces as much as possible, but as yet it is still early to talk about any advantage for him.

36...f6?!

Shutting in his own rook at e6, which, of course, should have been left with scope to move. In Botvinnik's opinion, after 36...b6 37 ♖b4 ♖c6 38 ♗e2 a5! 39 ♖b3 ♔d8 Black would have had no difficulties. 36...♖f6 was also not bad (but not Polugayevsky's recommendation 36...♖g6 on account of 37 ♗e2!), but the best was 36...♖c5! – here it is only White who could have had any problems: 37 ♗e2 ♖xd5 38 ♖xd5 ♘d7! 39 ♖xg5 ♘c5, and after 40 ♖g4 ♘xe4+ 41 ♔f3 ♘d2+ 42 ♔f2 ♘e4+ the result is a draw.

37 a5! (an important link in Karpov's still far from obvious plan) **37...♖c6**

37...♘c4?! was a blank shot in view of 38 ♗e2! (38...♘xb2? 39 ♖b4).



38 ♗e2!

'White ignores the possibility of 38 ♖b4, forcing the retreat 38...♖c7, and prepares the advance of his queenside pawns.' (Botvinnik)

38...♔d8

Another impetuous time-trouble move. To his misfortune, Polugayevsky takes his king to c7 for the defence of the d6- and b7-pawns: but in freeing his rook at e6, he shuts in his other rook! 'With 38...♘g6 39 ♖b4 ♖c7 followed by ...♖e5 Black could have hindered the opponent's plan and consolidated his position.' (Botvinnik). 38...b5!? 39 axb6 ♖xb6 40 b4 ♖c6 was also acceptable, for example: 41 c4 ♖c7! 42 b5 a5, or 41 ♖a5 ♖xc3 42 ♖xa6 ♖c2 43 ♖a7+ ♔d8 44 b5 ♘d7 45 ♔e3 f5 with equality.

39 c4 ♔c7?

A fatal error with the flag about to fall. 'Exhausted by the endless calculation of variations (although it is well known that this does not improve confidence) and dispirited by my imperturbability, in time-trouble Polugayevsky not only squandered the enormous advantage he had gained, but also compromised his position.' (Karpov)

By 39...b6! (Polugayevsky) 40 b4 bxa5 41

♖xa5 ♔c7 Black would have safely emerged from time-trouble, retaining every chance of a draw. And even the 'unprincipled' 39...♔e7 40 b4 ♖c7 41 b5 ♖c8! would still have enabled him to stay afloat.

40 b4! ♘g6

An instantaneous reply – the last move before the time control! Alas, 40...b6 was clearly too late on account of 41 b5 axb5 42 cxb5 ♖c2 43 a6 and ♖d2! But now too White creates a passed pawn and wins the game.

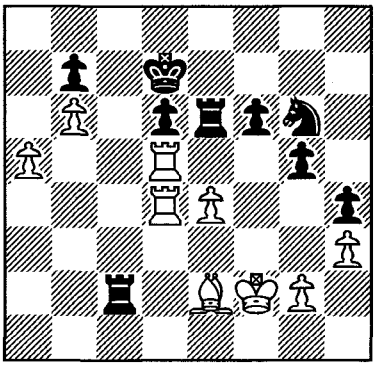
41 b5

'The adjournment analysis of this position cannot have brought Black any comfort.' (Botvinnik)

The following day, in the words of Roshal, Karpov arrived for the resumption 'tired and underslept, not having managed either to sleep or to have a bite to eat during the night-time analysis...' It goes without saying – this is a familiar picture!

41...axb5 (41...♖c5? 42 b6+ ♔c6 43 ♗d1 or 43 ♗h5 was completely bad) **42 cxb5 ♖c2 43 b6+ ♔d7**

If 43...♔c6, then 44 ♔e3 (Polugayevsky), for example: 44...♖xe4+ 45 ♖xe4 ♔xd5 46 a6!, or 44...♖c5 45 ♖xc5+ dxc5 46 ♖d8 ♘f4 47 ♖c8+ ♔d7 48 ♖c7+ ♔d6 49 ♗g4, and the curtain comes down.



44 ♖d2!

A move of fearful strength. Now the main soloist becomes the previously unnoticed 'stupid' bishop, which Karpov preserved from exchange!

However, the variation 44 ♔e3 ♘f4 45 ♗b5+! ♔e7 46 a6 ♘xg2+ 47 ♔f3 ♘e1+, which Polugayevsky considered to be drawn, would also have brought White success after 48 ♔g4! ♖c8 49 ♖c4! ♖xc4 50 axb7, or 48...♔f7! 49 ♔h5! (but not 49 axb7?? ♔g6! 50 ♖d2 ♖xe4 mate) 49...♖c8 50 ♖xd6.

44...♖xd2 45 ♖xd2 ♖e5

After 45...♖xe4 46 ♗b5+ ♔c8 everyone gave 47 ♖c2+ ♔b8 48 a6 bxa6 49 ♗xa6 ♖e8 50 b7 ♘e7 51 ♖e2! winning the knight, although 47 ♖xd6 is simpler.

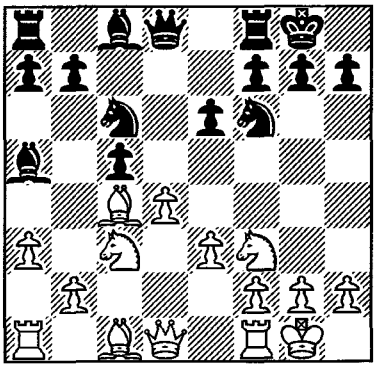
46 a6! ♔c6 (or 46...bxa6 47 ♗xa6 ♘e7 48 ♖b2 ♘c6 49 ♗b5! Polugayevsky) **47 ♖b2 ♘f4** (47...♖a5 48 ♗c4 and ♗d5+) **48 a7 ♖a5 49 ♗c4!**, and in view of the inevitable ♖a2 Black resigned (**1-0**).

'This was not yet the end, just the first crack. Polugayevsky was destroyed only by the following game,' Karpov remembers. 'Playing his own variations against him is like crossing a minefield. But that was how I handled this match: when you lose on your home ground, the pain is stronger. True, the risk was enormous, but I was not afraid to take a risk.'

In the 5th game Polugayevsky employed another novelty and quickly gained a winning position. But Karpov held on with defiant confidence, by which his opponent was literally bewitched: 'Polugayevsky believed in my composure... It should be said that in matches in general – somewhere around the 3rd or 4th game – you begin as though to perceive your opponent, his mood and, even perhaps his desires. Sometimes you guess his thoughts, or at least the direction in which these thoughts are working. It is probable that Polugayevsky too sensed that I was no longer at all afraid, that inwardly I had already given myself a nought and so I was absolutely calm. But he, he still had to achieve the win, and – wouldn't you agree, it's amusing in such a situation? – the psychological advantage as though passed to me. And this destroyed him!'

Game 55
L.Polugayevsky-A.Karpov
Candidates Match,
Moscow 1974, 5th game
Nimzo-Indian Defence E56

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 5 ♗d3 c5 6 ♘f3 d5 7 0-0 dxc4 8 ♗xc4 ♘c6 9 a3 ♗a5



A rare plan (compared with 9...♗xc3 10 bxc3 ♕c7), which had already been employed by Karpov, and before him – by Polugayevsky himself and Larsen. Black wants to retain his bishop or exchange it in under favourable circumstances.

10 ♗a2

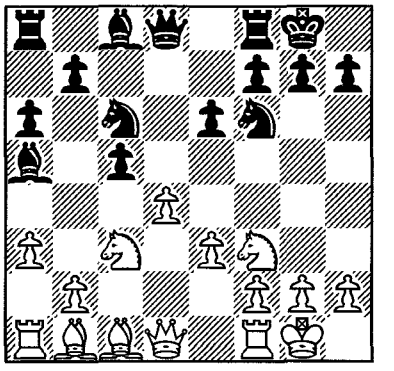
By that time 10 ♕d3, the main move of the 1960s, had already gone out of fashion. The 1st game went 10 ♗d3 cxd4 11 exd4 ♗b6 12 ♗e3 ♘d5, and here White employed some home preparation which was highly rated by Botvinnik: 13 ♗g5!? (instead of 13 ♘xd5 exd5 14 h3 ♘e7 15 ♗g5 f6 16 ♗d2 ♗f5 with equality, Gligoric-Karpov, Hastings 1971/72) 13...f6 14 ♗e3! ♘ce7 15 ♕c2 ♘xe3 16 fxe3 g6 17 ♗c4 (17 ♘a4!?) 17...♘f5 18 ♖fe1 ♔g7 19 ♖ad1 with an advantage. But then Polugayevsky found some improvement for Black and he began playing 10 ♗a2.

10...a6?!

Karpov repeats a recent game of his with Taimanov, following the principle 'leave well alone'. But the point of this move is unclear: ♘b5 is not a threat, and the loss of time on the preparation of ...b7-b5 looks too great a luxury.

The 7th game went 10...♗b6 11 dxc5 ♗xc5 12 b4 ♗d6 13 ♗b2 ♕e7 14 ♕c2 ♗d7 15 ♖fd1?! ♘e5! 16 ♘g5 ♖ac8 17 f4 ♘g6 with equality, but by 15 ♘e4! (Polugayevsky) White could have retained the advantage. Other known equalising attempts are 10...cxd4 11 exd4 ♗b6 12 ♗e3 ♘d5 (Taimanov-Parma, Tbilisi 1973), or 10...♕e7 11 ♕c2 cxd4 12 exd4 ♖d8 (Donner-Unzicker, Bad Eibling 1974).

11 ♗b1!



A novelty! The alternatives are weaker: 11 ♘e2 cxd4 12 ♘exd4 ♘xd4 13 ♘xd4 ♗c7 14 ♗d2 ♗d6 15 ♖c1 ♗d7 16 ♗b1 ♖c8 (Taimanov-Karpov, 41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973), or 11 ♘a4 cxd4 12 exd4 h6! 13 ♗f4 ♗c7 14 ♗xc7 ♕xc7 15 ♕e2 ♖d8 16 ♖fd1 ♗d7 17 ♖ac1 ♗e8 (3rd game), in each case with equality.

Here is Polugayevsky's commentary, dated 1981: 'When in the third game Black easily obtained an equal game, I thought to myself: is it worth going in for the same variation yet again? Is it worth 'losing' the white pieces for the sake of a theoretical argument? But nevertheless, I sensed that the truth was somewhere close at hand! And suddenly, quantity was transformed into quality – the many hours of analysis enabled me to hit upon the correct order of

moves and to inflict a serious blow on the system which Karpov chose in the match, and which had been constantly played by... me myself. White can pride himself on the move in the game. Contrary, apparently, to the unshakeable laws of chess, he moves his bishop three times in the opening, and, while still undeveloped, obtains a virtually won position.'

11...♗b6

The fact that Karpov spent just seven minutes on this move testifies to his particularly practical approach to the solving of unexpected opening problems. After 11...b5?! the simple 12 dxc5 is unpleasant, but 11...♕e7 came into consideration.

Sixteen years later Karpov explained the psychological motives behind his 11th and 12th moves: 'I again ran into a home preparation, and such a splendid one that, when my opponent made this move, I instantly understood: this is the end, I am unable to save the game. Without even having time to become anxious or suffer, I immediately felt that things were hopeless. But if this is so, is it worth being upset? After all, it has already happened and you can't change anything; as they say, it's no use crying over spilt milk. And I adopted a philosophical stance. Of course, it didn't occur to me to give in. I am a competitor, and as long as I have at least one chance, I will fight. Let's see, I thought, how he's going to do it.'

It is amazing that even many years later both contestants in the match considered White's position after 11 ♗b1 to be virtually won. Although even without the help of a computer, relying only on common sense and simple analysis, it can be established that Black's defensive resources are still very great.

12 ♕c2

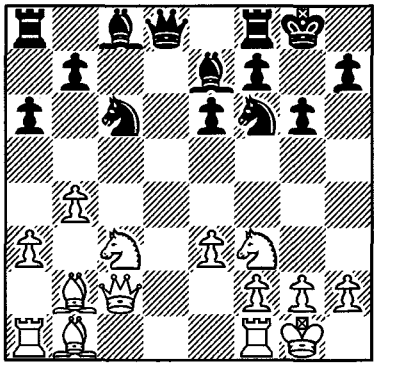
'Straightforward and very strong!' (Polugayevsky). 12 dxc5 ♗xc5 13 b4 and ♗b2 is also not bad (as in the 7th game – cf. the note to Black's 10th move) with a slight, but very enduring advantage for White, typical of such symmetric structures.

12...g6?

A fatal weakening of the long diagonal. 'This does not solve Black's defensive problems, but what is he to do?' writes Polugayevsky, giving 12...cxd4 13 exd4 ♘xd4 (? – *G.K.*) 14 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 15 ♗e3 ♕d6 16 ♗g5 ♖d8 (Botvinnik) 17 ♗xf6! with a powerful attack (if 17...gxf6 the intermediate move 18 ♖d1! is strong).

But the two players overestimated the virtues of White's position – after 13...h6! Black could have successfully defended, for example: 14 ♖d1 (14 ♗e3 ♘e7 or even 14...♘xd4!?) 14...♕c7 (14...♘e7!?) 15 ♘e4 (15 d5 ♘e5!) 15...♘xe4 16 ♕xe4 f5 17 ♕c2 (17 ♕h4 ♕e7) 17...♗d7 etc.

13 dxc5 ♗xc5 14 b4 ♗e7 (14...♗d6 15 ♖d1 ♕e7 16 ♗b2 also favours White) **15 ♗b2**



15...e5

'Perhaps the best practical chance (15...b6? 16 ♘e4). Black has no convenient squares for his light-squared bishop or queen.' (Polugayevsky)

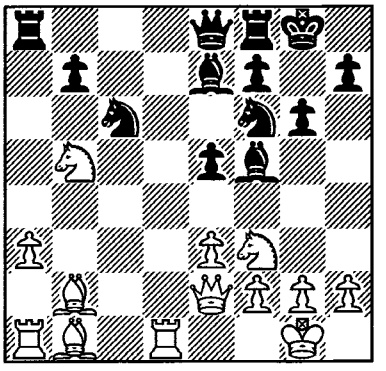
16 ♖d1 ♕e8

After 16...♕c7 Botvinnik and Polugayevsky recommended 17 ♗a2 ♗g4 18 ♘d5 ♘xd5 19 ♗xd5 ♖ac8 20 ♕e4 'with very strong pressure' and 'a decisive advantage for White', probably having in mind 20...♗f5 21 ♕c4 ♕b6 22 ♕b3. It is perhaps even better to play 20 h3! ♗xf3 (20...♗f5? 21 e4) 21 ♗xf3 with an obvious advantage. And in addition – 17 e4!? and ♘d5!

17 b5

'The positional approach – 17 h3, ♗a2 and so on – was also possible. But I was convinced that the position was ripe for more positive measures.' (Polugayevsky)

17...axb5 18 ♘xb5 ♗f5 19 ♕e2

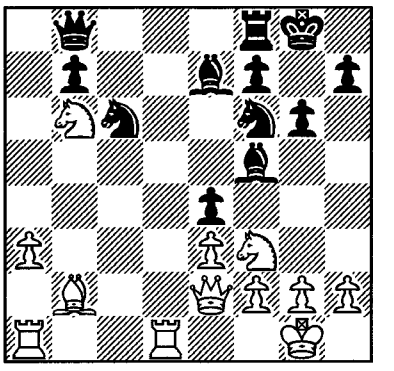


19...♗xb1

Giving up the exchange without any compensation. Alas, 19...♕b8 20 ♗xf5 gxf5 21 ♘h4 ♕c8 22 ♕f3 is bad for Black, as is 19...e4 20 ♘h4 ♖d8 21 ♖xd8 ♕xd8 22 ♘xf5 gxf5 23 ♗a2 with a strong attack, or 20...♗g4 21 f3 exf3 22 gxf3 ♗h5 23 ♘c7 ♕c8 24 ♘xa8 ♕h3 25 ♕f2! (intending ♕g3; 25 ♘b6 ♕xh4 26 ♘d5 is also good enough – Botvinnik, Polugayevsky) 25...♘g4 26 ♕g3 ♕xh4 27 ♕xh4 ♗xh4 28 fxg4 ♗xg4 29 ♖c1! ♗g5 (29...♖xa8 30 ♖c4 h5 31 h3) 30 ♘c7 ♗xe3+ 31 ♔f1 ♗xc1 32 ♗xc1 with a decisive material advantage.

20 ♘c7 ♕b8 21 ♘xa8 ♗f5 (21...e4? is even worse: 22 ♖axb1 exf3 23 ♕xf3 and the knight at f6 is under attack) **22 ♘b6 e4**

In a desperate position Karpov tries to complicate the play as much as possible, even at the cost of new concessions. He opens the diagonal for the white bishop and gives the opponent's pieces a strong point in the centre – all for the sake of weakening the enemy king's pawn screen. As yet it is altogether unclear how this weakening will be exploited, but now there is some pretext for the creation of counterplay!



23 ♘d4 ♘xd4 24 ♗xd4 ♗g4 25 f3 (this cannot be avoided) **25...exf3 26 gxf3 ♗e6**

In Polugayevsky's opinion, 'perhaps the bishop should have been retreated to h5, so as to keep the f3-pawn under attack,' but this would have allowed 27 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 28 ♘d7, winning.

27 ♖ac1 (the immediate 27 ♕b2! was even stronger – Botvinnik) **27...♖d8 28 ♕b2! ♘e8**

Tal, who arrived in the auditorium at this moment, gives an interesting account: 'The first thing that struck me (I had not yet seen the position) was this: with measured steps Karpov was calmly walking from one end of the stage to the other. His opponent was sitting with his head in his hands, and simply physically it was felt that he was in trouble. "Everything would appear to be clear," I thought to myself, "things are difficult for Polugayevsky." But the demonstration board showed just the opposite! White was a clear exchange to the good – about such positions it is customary to say that the rest is a matter of technique. Who knows, perhaps Karpov's confidence, his habit of retaining his composure in the most desperate situations, was transmitted to his opponent and made Polugayevsky excessively nervous.'

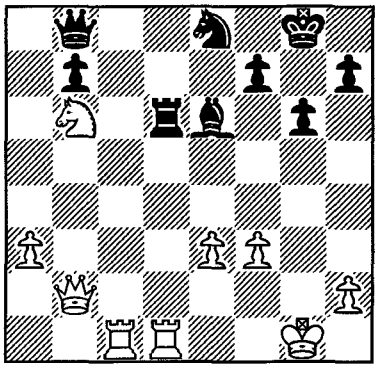
The spectators saw that Anatoly even had a slight smile on his face. 'To be honest, this wasn't a pretence, it somehow happened of its own accord,' he said years later. 'And it was

the natural serenity of my behaviour that overwhelmed Polugayevsky. He saw that on the board I was done for, but at the same time I was so calm and playing so easily! This meant that I was seeing something that he didn't see... He was a sorry sight. Again and again he worked through the variations – and he couldn't understand how I could save myself. This wasn't surprising! – after all, he was looking for something that wasn't there...'

29 ♗e5 ♗d6

For the moment it is not possible to bring the queen out from the corner: after 29...♕a7 White decides matters with both the 'cold' 30 a4 ♕a5 31 ♕b5, and the 'hot' 30 ♕b5!? ♘g7 31 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 32 ♗d4 (and if 32...♕xa3, then 33 ♖a1).

30 ♗xd6 (the paralysing 30 ♕d4! was very strong, and again 30...♕a7 is bad, because of 31 ♗xd6 ♖xd6 32 ♘c8) **30...♖xd6**



31 ♕b4?!

As Botvinnik rightly remarked, here there was more than one way to win. In particular everyone suggested 31 ♕b5 (depriving the black queen of the important g5-square) 31...♕d8 32 ♖xd6 ♘xd6 33 ♖d1 ♕c7 34 ♕e5, or 31 ♖xd6 ♕xd6 32 a4 – according to Botvinnik 'the a-pawn must be kept', but 32 ♕d4! is even better, since 32...♕xa3 is bad in view of 33 ♖a1 ♕b3 34 ♖a8 and wins.

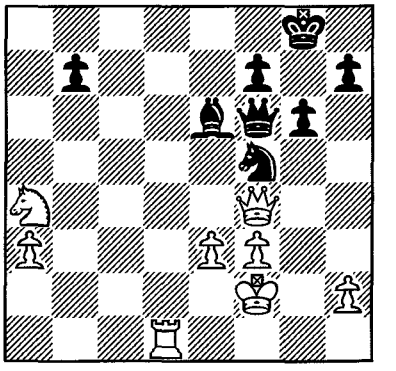
31...♕d8!

The black queen suddenly comes active and White effectively has to win the game anew. Taking account of his vexation at the mistake committed and the tiredness accumulated by the fifth hour of play, it was not at all easy to readjust for such a task.

32 ♖xd6 ♘xd6 33 ♖d1 ♕g5+ 34 ♔f2 ♘f5 35 ♕f4 ♕f6 36 ♘a4

'In time-trouble White makes the first correct move along the selected path, but he goes wrong later.' (Polugayevsky). After 36 ♘d7? ♕b2+ 37 ♔g1 ♗xd7 38 ♖xd7 ♕e2! Black would have easily gained a draw.

The alternative was 36 ♘c4 ♗xc4 37 ♕xc4, and if 37...♕e5, then 38 ♕f4 ♕b2+ 39 ♔e1 ♕xa3 40 e4, practically forcing 40...♕c3+ 41 ♕d2 ♕xf3 42 exf5 ♕h1+ 43 ♔e2 ♕xh2+ 44 ♔d3 ♕h3+ 45 ♔c4 ♕xf5 46 ♕d8+ ♔g7 47 ♕d4+, when White should win. Botvinnik, Tal and Polugayevsky gave 37...♕b2+ 38 ♕e2 ♕xa3, regarding this position as drawn. But, in my view, White is gradually able to convert his exchange advantage: 39 ♕d3 ♕c5 40 ♔e2 followed by e3-e4, or 39...♕b2+ 40 ♖d2 ♕e5 41 f4 etc.



36...♗b3! 37 ♖d2?

'Chances of success were still offered by 37 ♖e1, as suggested by Furman. In this way White defends his important e3-pawn, and he can hope to gradually convert his material advantage.' (Polugayevsky). 37 ♖d3! was more methodical, and after 37...♗xa4 (37...♗c2 38 ♖d2) 38 ♕xa4 ♕b2+ 39 ♔g1 ♕c1+ 40 ♕d1 or 39...h5 40 ♕b3 White's task would be greatly simplified.

37...g5!

'With amazing coolness and skill, Karpov discovers every conceivable chance for counterplay. As for White, he had clearly lost his composure.' (Polugayevsky)

38 ♕b8+

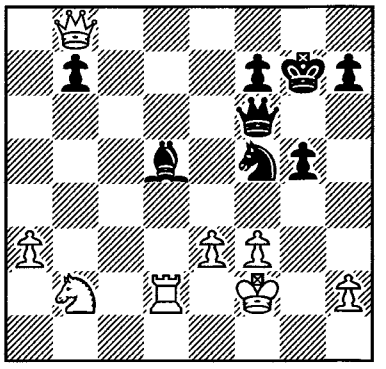
'After 38 ♕e4 ♗xa4 39 ♕xa4 ♕e5 Black's queen becomes more active, and he wins a pawn.' (Botvinnik)

38...♔g7 39 ♘b2

Immediately before the time control the situation has become much sharper. The 'active' 39 ♘c5?! is weak on account of 39...♕c3! 40 ♘xb3 ♕xe3+ 41 ♔f1 ♕xf3+ 42 ♔g1 ♕xb3 (42...♕e3+!?) 43 ♕e5+ ♔g6, and White has only a draw.

39...♗d5!

After 39...♕e7 40 ♖e2 Black's initiative could have evaporated.

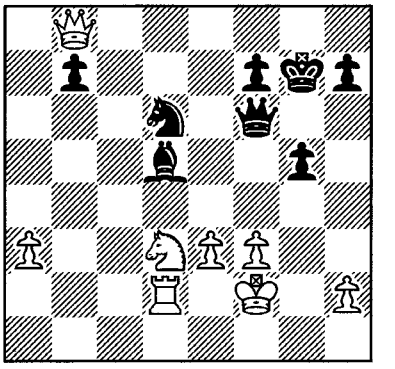


40 ♘d3?!

With his last move before the time control White throws away the last remnants of his former advantage. In his commentary Polugayevsky recommends 40 ♘d1 with the idea of 40...♘h4 (Botvinnik) 41 f4!, when Black loses (41...♗c6 42 ♕d8), and gives 40...♘xe3! as the only move leading to a draw, which Karpov would have had to find at the board!

At the same time he adds: '40 f4 fails, of course, to 40...♘d6!' But this sharp continuation was also dangerous for Black and would have forced him to demonstrate precise adjournment analysis! After 41 ♖xd5 ♕xb2+ 42 ♔g3 ♘e4+ 43 ♔f3 ♘d2+ 44 ♔g4! the only way to play is 44...h5+! 45 ♔xh5 ♘e4!, for example: 46 fxg5 ♕e2+ 47 ♔h4 ♕f2+ 48 ♔g4 ♕g2+ 49 ♔f5 ♕xg5+! 50 ♔xe4 ♕g2+ with perpetual pursuit of the king, or 46 ♖xg5+ ♘xg5 47 fxg5 (47 ♔xg5 ♕g2+ 48 ♔f5 ♕g6+ etc.) 47...♕e2+ 48 ♔h4 ♕xe3 49 ♕g3 ♕e4+ 50 ♕g4 ♕e1+ 51 ♔h5 ♕e8 52 ♕d4+ f6+ 53 ♔g4 ♕e2+, saving the queen endgame a pawn down.

40...♘d6!



41 ♘f4!

This sealed move is the only way to force a draw. The resumption did not last long.

41...gxf4 42 ♖xd5 ♕b2+ (42...fxe3+ 43 ♔xe3 ♕e6+ 44 ♔d4 is no better) **43 ♔f1! fxe3 44 ♖g5+! ½-½**

In view of 44...♔h6 45 ♕xd6+ ♔xg5 46 ♕e7+, picking up the e3-pawn.

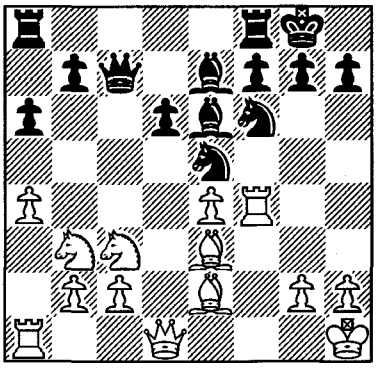
'A draw which was equivalent to a catastrophe: Polugayevsky realised that he couldn't win any position against me,' Karpov sums up. 'It was effectively this game that was the last in the match,' Tal echoes, 'The rest of the games were one-sided. Karpov was very much on the rise, whereas Polugayevsky was unable to regain his composure after the shocks in the 4th and 5th games.' He consistently failed to convert his superiority in opening preparation, since he was inferior to his opponent in the subsequent play...

Polugayevsky arrived for the 6th game feel-

ing downcast. He was tormented by thoughts about misfortune and the unjustness of fate: instead of a certain one and a half points – only half a point, instead of the lead in the match – the role of having to catch up. At this moment – after just five games! – for him, as for many other experts, it was still hard to appreciate fully what an enormous force he was up against.

Game 56
A.Karpov-L.Polugayevsky
Candidates Match,
Moscow 1974, 6th game
Sicilian Defence B92

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e7 8 0-0 ♗e6 9 f4 ♕c7 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♔h1!? 0-0 12 ♗e3 exf4 13 ♖xf4 ♘e5

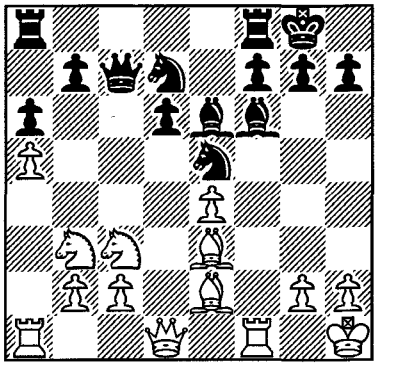


14 a5!

An important improvement (in the 4th game 14 ♘d4 was played – *Game No.54*). White immediately fixes the enemy queenside and vacates the a4-square, via which his queen's rook may come into play.

14...♘fd7 (later they played only 14...♖ac8 or 14...♖fe8 – *Game No.57*) **15 ♖f1 ♗f6?!**

Underestimating the role of White's potential outpost at d5, which is in enemy territory and therefore demands special control. 15...♖ac8 or 15...♖fe8 is sounder, not fearing the manoeuvre ♘d4-f5.



16 ♘d5! ♗xd5 17 ♕xd5!

A sudden sharpening of the struggle – an intuitive sacrifice of two pawns! In explaining this unusual decision in a commentary made in 1978, Karpov discloses the peculiarities of his style:

'Sometimes I am reproached for being dry, rational and careful. Yes, I am a practical player, and my play is largely based on technique. I attempt to play "correct" chess and never take risks as, say, Larsen does. As White, like everyone else, I aim for an advantage from the very start, but as Black I try first of all to equalise. But when there is a choice of moves, I by no means choose the simplest, but rather the most expedient. If there are several equally good continuations, my choice depends to a great extent on my opponents. Against Tal, for instance, I prefer to go in for simple positions, which are not to his taste, whereas against Petrosian I try to make the play more complicated. But if I see only one correct path, then, whoever is playing against me, I go only along that path. However, I feel that in recent times my style has undergone certain changes.

'Let us return to the game. Previously the sacrifice of two pawns, which I offered to Polugayevsky, would probably not have occurred to me. Everyone thought that it had been prepared at home. But, "as God is my witness", it was pure improvisation at the board. Even today I find this a "terrible" decision on my

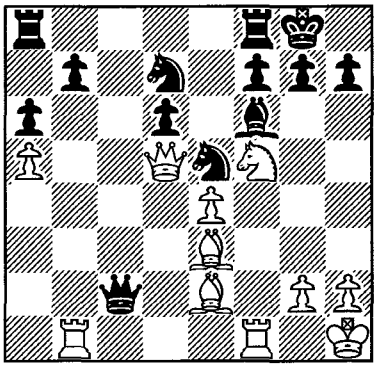
part. But after the quiet 17 exd5 ♘c4 18 ♗xc4 ♕xc4 nothing remains of White's opening advantage.'

17...♕xc2!

Accepting the challenge! Polugayevsky thought for more than an hour here: suppose White had a forced win prepared at home?! In Karpov's opinion, 'in the event of Black declining the sacrifice, he would have come under heavy positional pressure.' In my opinion, after 17...♘c6 18 c3 ♗e5 he would merely have had a slightly inferior position, but – and this is far more important – Polugayevsky probably did not believe that he would be able to defend it against Karpov!

18 ♘d4 ♕xb2 (18...♕c5?! 19 ♘f5! is dangerous) **19 ♖ab1 ♕c3 20 ♘f5 ♕c2!**

The best defence. After 20...♘c5 21 ♗d4 ♕c2 22 ♘xd6 ♕xe2 23 ♗xe5 ♘d7 (23...♗xe5? 24 ♘xf7!) 24 ♗g3 White's domination would have extended over almost the entire board.



21 ♖be1?!

This move took Karpov 20 minutes, but... 'An inaccuracy: now Black finds a defence. After 21 ♖fe1 White would have gained a big advantage.' Yes, the deployment of the rooks is one of the most treacherous opening/middlegame problems! But in the given instance it made sense to leave the rook on the b-file, retaining the threat of its invasion at b7. However, whether White has an advantage after 21 ♖fe1 is still an open question:

1) 21...♖fd8 22 ♘xd6 ♘b8!? (no direct refutation of this manoeuvre is apparent) 23 ♖xb7 ♘bc6 24 ♗b6 ♗e7 25 ♗xd8 ♖xd8 26 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 27 ♕xe5 ♕d2 28 ♖b1 ♘g6! 29 ♕h5 (29 ♕d5 ♖xd6 30 ♕xd2 ♖xd2 31 ♗xa6 ♖a2 with equality) 29...♕xd6 30 ♖d1 ♕f6 31 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 32 ♕d5 ♕b8 33 g3 ♘e7 with drawing chances;

2) 21...♘c5 22 ♘xd6 ♘cd3 23 ♗xd3 ♘xd3 24 ♖ed1, and here Karpov considers only 24...♘f2+? 25 ♗xf2 ♕xf2 26 e5, winning, or 24...♘e5 25 ♘xb7 (in my view, 25 ♗d4 or 25 ♖xb7 ♖ab8 26 ♖b6! is stronger), although 24...♘b2!? is also possible, with good chances of holding on after 25 ♖dc1 ♕d3 26 ♕xd3 ♘xd3 27 ♖d1 ♘e5, or 25 ♖f1 ♕d3 26 ♕xd3 ♘xd3 27 ♖xb7 ♖fb8! etc.

21...♘c5?!

An obvious move, but... now Black is balancing on the edge of a precipice! It is strange that Karpov does not make any comment on it: after all, back in 1975 Botvinnik pointed out that 'Black could have immediately mobilised his queen's rook by 21...♖ad8!, and in the event of 22 ♘xd6 *(22 ♕xb7?! ♘c5! – G.K.)* 22...♘b8 consolidated the placing of his pieces.' After 23 ♕c5 ♕a4! this would indeed have given him a clear way to equalise:

1) 24 ♖a1 ♕b3 25 ♖fb1 (25 ♖ab1 ♕a2) 25...♘bd7! (forcing the exchange of queens) 26 ♖xb3 ♘xc5 27 ♗xc5 ♘d7! 28 ♗b6 (or 28 ♘xf7 ♘xc5 with equality) 28...♗xa1 29 ♗xd8 ♘c5 30 ♖b6 ♖xd8 31 ♘xb7 ♘xb7 32 ♖xb7 ♗c3 with a draw;

2) 24 ♘xb7 ♘d3 25 ♗xd3 ♖xd3 26 ♖xf6 (or 26 ♕f5 ♘d7 27 ♘c5 ♘xc5 28 ♗xc5 ♖e8 29 e5 ♖d5 etc.) 26...gxf6 (26...♘d7 27 ♕c6 ♖xe3! will also do) 27 ♗h6 ♖e8 28 ♕f5 ♕d1! 29 ♕f1 ♕xe1 30 ♕xe1 ♖xe4 31 ♕c1 (31 ♕g1? ♖ed4) 31...♖c4! with a spectacular draw.

22 ♘xd6 ♘cd3 23 ♗xd3 ♘xd3

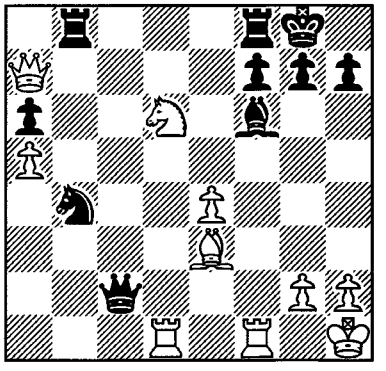
'The only move! After 23...♕xd3? 24 ♗d4 with the threat of ♖d1 Black's position would have become critical.' (Botvinnik). For example: 24...♘g4 25 ♖d1 ♕e2 26 e5! with a classic catastrophe on the f7-square.

24 ♖d1 ♘b4 25 ♕xb7?!

Karpov hurries to regain the material as soon as possible, although 25 ♕h5! (after Botvinnik's move 25 ♕f5 Black has the satisfactory reply 25...♘c6) 'would have created the threat of 26 ♖xf6 gxf6 27 ♕g4+ ♔h8 28 ♗h6, which is not easily parried – 25...g6 26 ♕c5.'

Of course, after 26...♕xc5 27 ♗xc5 Black's defence is difficult, but it would appear that he has a saving regrouping – 27...♗c3! 28 ♘xb7 ♖fe8 29 ♖f3 ♘a2 30 ♘d6 ♖e5 with equalising chances, or 28 ♖f3 ♘a2 29 ♖b1 (29 ♖df1 ♗b4! 30 ♘xb7 ♗xc5 31 ♘xc5 ♖a7 32 e5 ♖c8 with equality) 29...♗e5! 30 g4 (if 30 ♖xb7, then 30...♖fd8 forces a draw) 30...♘c3 31 ♖xb7 (31 ♖bf1!?) 31...♖fb8! 32 ♖fxf7 (32 ♖e7 ♖b1+ 33 ♔g2 ♖b2+ is no better) 32...♖xb7 33 ♖xb7 ♗xd6 34 ♗xd6 ♘xe4 35 ♗e5 ♘f2+ 36 ♔g2 ♘xg4 37 ♖g7+ ♔f8 38 ♖xh7 ♖d8, nevertheless gaining a draw.

25...♖ab8 26 ♕a7



26...♕c6?

Polugayevsky cracks under the tension and commits a decisive mistake. '26...♕e2 would have given Black some counterplay, although even here after 27 ♗b6 the advantage is with White.' (Karpov). A questionable assertion: 27...♘d3! 28 ♘f5 ♘f4 29 ♘e3 ♗e5, and no advantage is apparent.

27 ♖de1!? is far more unpleasant for Black. After this Botvinnik recommended 27...♕h5 (? – *G.K.*) 28 ♖f5 ♕g4 'with a tenable position', but here 29 e5! is strong. And 28 ♖xf6! gxf6 29 ♘f5 is even better, with an irresistible attack: 29...♖b5 30 ♗h6!, or 29...♖fe8 30 ♕c7! etc.

Where then should the queen move to? After 27...♕g4?! the quiet 28 h3 ♕e6 29 ♖d1 is possible, as is the sharp 28 ♖xf6!? gxf6 29 ♘f5 ♕xe4 30 ♘e7+ ♔h8 31 ♗d2 with the initiative for White. 27...♕a2? is dangerous because of the same thematic sacrifice 28 ♖xf6! gxf6 29 ♘f5, when it is doubtful whether Black has a satisfactory defence: 29...♘d3 30 ♕xa6 ♖b1 is bad on account of 31 ♘e7+ ♔g7 32 ♗h6+!! when Black is crushed; if 29...♘c6, then 30 ♕xa6 ♕xa5 31 ♕f1! with decisive threats, while after 29...♕xa5 there is a quiet move of murderous strength – 30 ♖f1!! (30...♘c6 31 ♕d7 etc.).

It would appear that only 27...♕b2! (defending against ♖xf6!) would have retained equal chances, for example: 28 ♘c4 (nothing is achieved by 28 ♖b1 ♕e2 or 28 ♖f2 ♕e5 29 ♗f4 ♕d4) 28...♕a2 29 e5 ♘c2!, and Black is alright.

27 ♗f4!

A typical Karpov move, denying the opponent even a hint of counterplay: 'The threat of e4-e5 restricts Black, and his knight at b4 finds itself out of play.' The sharp 27 ♖xf6! gxf6 28 ♗h6 with the threat of ♕e3 would also have been decisive, for example: 28...♕c2 (28...♘d3 29 ♗xf8) 29 ♖c1 ♕d3? 30 ♕d7! ♕e2 31 ♕h3, or 29...♕e2 30 ♕d4 ♘d3 31 ♕xf6 ♕b2 32 ♕g5+ ♔h8 33 ♕g3! etc. In the press centre this exchange sacrifice was fervently upheld by Furman, but after seeing Anatoly's move, he said: 'That's also good.'

27...♖a8 28 ♕f2 ♖ad8 (if 28...♕c3, then 29 ♕e2!) **29 ♕g3!**

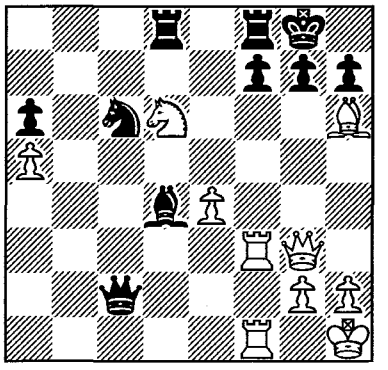
'The threat is stronger than its execution! Paradoxically, this often is indeed the case. White does not hurry to advance e4-e5 and increases the pressure.' (Karpov)

29...♕c3

'Black has no satisfactory defence: Karpov has succeeded in implementing his most effec-

tive strategy – that of domination. Material is equal, but White's pieces occupy strong positions and control the most important squares on the board, whereas the black pieces are merely convenient targets for him to attack. All that remains is for White to concentrate his forces for the decisive stroke against Black's kingside.' (Botvinnik)

30 ♖f3 ♕c2 31 ♖df1 ♗d4 32 ♗h6 (a simple, but spectacular finish; 32 ♘f5 ♕xe4 33 ♗d6 would also have won) **32...♘c6**



33 ♘f5

33 ♘xf7 ♕c4 would by no means have 'complicated matters', as Karpov writes, but was a second way to win: after 34 ♗xg7! to avoid a pretty mate Black would have had to part first with his queen – 34...♕xf1+ 35 ♖xf1 ♗xg7 36 ♕b3!, then with a rook – 36...♖xf7 (36...♘d4 37 ♘h6++ ♔h8 38 ♕g8+! and ♘f7 mate) 37 ♕xf7+ ♔h8, and after 38 ♕c7! – also with his knight!

33...♕b2

Or 33...♗e5 34 ♗xg7! ♗xg3 35 ♖xg3 (Karpov) 35...h5 36 ♗f6+ ♔h7 37 ♖g7+ ♔h8 38 ♖xf7+ ♔g8 39 ♘h6 mate (Botvinnik).

34 ♗c1! ♕b5 35 ♘h6+ ♔h8 36 ♘xf7+ (to cap it all, Black also has to give up material) **36...♖xf7 37 ♖xf7 ♗f6 38 ♕f2 ♔g8 39 ♖xf6 gxf6 40 ♕xf6 1-0**

The best game of the match.

The score became 2-0 with four draws. Karpov needed just one more win. He could perhaps have gained this in the 7th game. Polugayevsky played very nervously: first he lost the opening advantage he had gained, then he suddenly launched an unfounded attack on the kingside, which merely led to the creation of weaknesses in his own position. On the 25th move Karpov could have advantageously opened the centre and gained a marked advantage. But, as Tal put it, 'it would appear that he decided not to deviate from his planned program, in which the optimal result in the "black" games was a draw.'

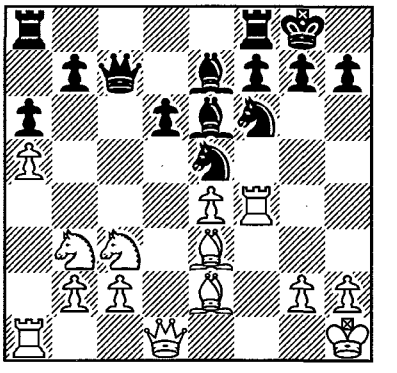
The match concluded in the 8th game. In essence, this was the finishing off of a seriously wounded opponent.

Game 57

A.Karpov-L.Polugayevsky

Candidates Match,
Moscow 1974, 8th game
Sicilian Defence B92

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e7 8 0-0 ♗e6 9 f4 ♕c7 10 a4 ♘bd7 11 ♔h1 0-0 12 ♗e3 exf4 13 ♖xf4 ♘e5 14 a5! (14 ♘d4 – *Game No.54*)



14...♖fe8

Another product of running repairs (14...♘fd7 – *Game No.56*).

Later Black switched to the standard Sicilian move 14...♖ac8, preparing ...♘fd7 (now this is safe, since White does not have ♘d5)

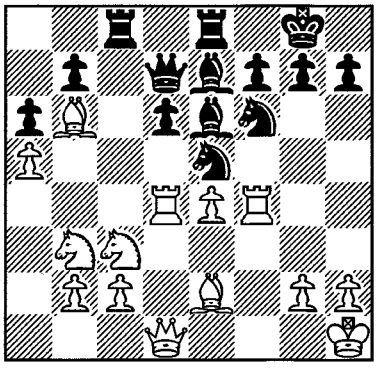
and preventing ♖a1-a4-d4, for example: 15 ♖a4 (15 ♗b6 ♕d7 16 ♖a4? ♖xc3) 15...♘fd7! (with the threat of ...♗g5) 16 ♖f1 ♘c4 17 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 18 ♖f2 ♗f6 19 ♗d4 ♖fe8 with equality (Karpov-Browne, Manila 1976). 15 ♘d4 is better, but here too after 15...♘fd7 it is hard for White to gain a noticeable advantage: 16 ♖f1 ♖fe8 17 ♘f5 ♗f8 18 ♕e1 ♔h8 19 ♕g3 g6 (Tal-K.Grigorian, 42nd USSR Championship, Leningrad 1974), 16 ♕e1 ♖fe8 17 ♕g3 ♘g6 18 ♖ff1 ♗f6 (Tseshkovsky-Balashov, Vilnius Zonal 1975), or 16 ♕d2 ♖fe8 17 ♘f5 ♗f8 18 ♖f2 ♔h8 and ...g7-g6 (Matanovic-Polugayevsky, Moscow 1977).

15 ♗b6 (15 ♘d4!? Tseshkovsky-Polugayevsky, Sochi 1974) **15...♕d7** (15...♕c8 with the idea of ...♘fd7 is also possible) **16 ♖a4 ♖ac8!**

A good move, made however after 45 minutes' thought, which indicates Polugayevsky's uncertainty. The awkward 16...♘c6 (Botvinnik, Karpov) is of no use to Black.

17 ♖d4

A manoeuvre which at the time was considered dangerous for Black. But is this in fact so?



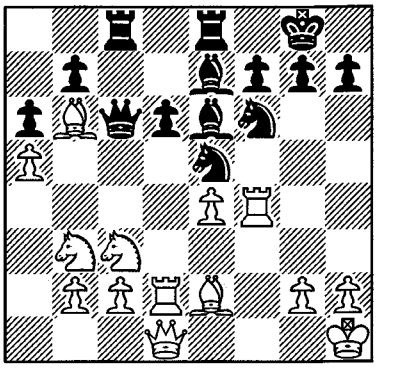
17...♕c6

Annotating this game in *Informator*, Polugayevsky suggested here 17...♖xc3! 18 bxc3 ♕c6! 'with an unclear game'. Karpov retorts: 'However, in White's favour is the very fact that Black has to go in for a questionable exchange sacrifice, aiming in return for unclear positional compensation.'

Using pure logic in the evaluation of a position is, of course, pointless. But if account is taken of concrete factors, it becomes apparent Black does indeed have very clear compensation for the exchange: his bastions in the centre are strong, whereas White's pawns are broken and are targets for attack. 19...♕xc3 is threatened, and he has to play 19 ♕e1 (19 c4 ♘fd7!), but after 19...d5! 20 ♖d1 (20 ♕g3 ♘g6) 20...♘xe4 Black has nothing to fear, for example: 21 c4 ♘xc4 22 ♘d4 ♕c8 23 ♘xe6 fxe6 24 ♗d3 ♘xb6 25 ♗xe4 dxe4 26 axb6 e3 with equality.

18 ♖d2

Karpov is content with his position: 'So, White has regrouped and wants to carry out the manoeuvre ♘b3-d4-f5 which is traditional in this variation. Whereas the opponent has no active plan' (usually associated with ...♘fd7). But as yet he does not have any problems!

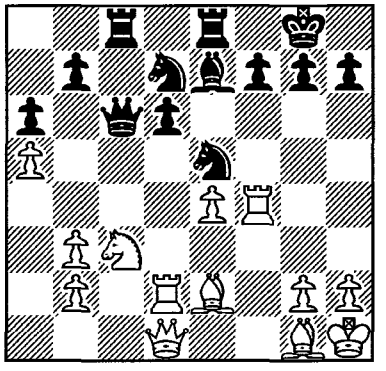


18...♗xb3

'Hurrying to eliminate this promising knight. If 18...♘g6 there would have followed 19 ♘d4.' (Karpov). Polugayevsky also evaluated this variation White's favour. However, it is hard to say how dangerous his initiative is in reality: 19...♕d7 20 ♖f1 ♘e5, and after 21 ♘f5, apart from 21...♗xf5, the typical sacrifice 21...♖xc3!? 22 bxc3 ♘xe4 comes into consideration.

It can now be concluded that White's entire plan with the manoeuvre of his rook (a1-a4-d4-d2) and knight (b3-d4-f5) is not so terrible, as was once written by the commentators and authors of theoretical articles. Moreover, the exchange 18...♗xb3, although not obligatory, does not yet spoil anything.

19 cxb3 ♘**fd7** (of course, not 19...♘g6 20 ♖f1 ♘xe4? in view of 21 ♘xe4 ♕xe4 22 ♗f3 ♕b4 23 ♗xb7) **20 ♗g1**



20...♗g5?

A blunder, leading to the loss of the game and the match. The game Safarov-E.Vladimirov (1975), played soon afterwards, went 20...♕c7! 21 ♘d5 (21 b4?! ♗g5) 21...♕xa5 22 ♘xe7+ ♖xe7 23 ♖xd6 ♕c7, and the powerful outpost at e5 secured Black a good position.

Karpov again retorts: 'However, in all probability White's play can be improved: 21 ♖d5 ♘f6 22 ♗b6 ♕c6 23 ♖xf6! gxf6 24 ♗g4 with a powerful initiative for the exchange.' Alas, this variation has a 'hole': instead of 22...♕c6? Black has the very strong 22...♘xd5! 23 ♗xc7 ♘xf4 24 ♗b6 ♘xe2 25 ♕xe2 ♗f6 with excellent compensation for the queen.

After giving up his queen in another way, Polugayevsky encounters insuperable difficulties.

21 ♖xd6 ♗xf4

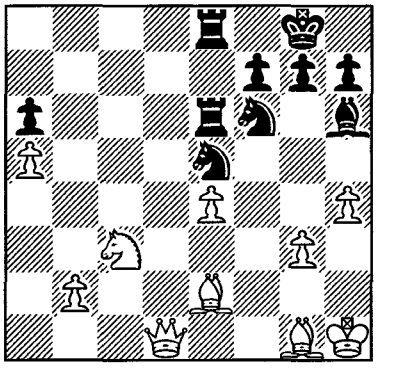
In the event of 21...♕xd6 (21...♕c7 22 ♖f5) 22 ♕xd6 ♗xf4 23 ♕b4 ♖b8 24 ♘d5 the white queen is again far more agile than the black rooks, and the pawn march b3-b4-b5 is on the agenda.

22 ♖xc6 ♖xc6 23 b4! (beginning the conversion of his pawn majority on the queenside) **23...♘f6?!**

'23...♖cc8 was better, coordinating the heavy pieces.' (Karpov). But here too after 24 b5 Black cannot save the game: 24...axb5 25 g3! ♗g5(h6) 26 ♗xb5 with the threat of ♕d5.

'Black should have united his rooks by 23...♖ee6, keeping the important d6-square under control.' (Botvinnik). And indeed, 24 b5 axb5 (24...♖ed6? 25 ♕f1!; 24...♖c7 25 ♗b6!; 24...♖c8 25 ♕d5!) 25 ♗xb5 ♖cd6 26 ♘d5 ♗g5 looks rather more tenacious.

24 b5 ♖ce6 25 bxa6 bxa6 26 g3 ♗g5 27 h4 ♗h6



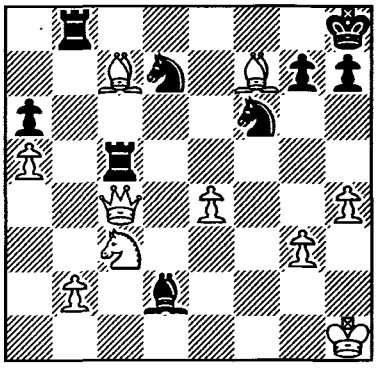
28 ♗b6!

'The pawn weakness at a6 has fatal consequences.' (Karpov). The 'sharp' 28 g4 g5 29 ♗e3 would also have won, but Botvinnik did not like this and... this is not the Karpov way of finishing off!

28...♘ed7

'The retreat of the centralised knight allows White's king's bishop to become more active. The last possibility of resisting was 28...♘fd7.' (Botvinnik). But then the activity of the white knight would have increased – 29 ♘d5! ♖c6(8) 30 ♔g2 ♖c1 31 ♕a4 etc.

29 ♗c4 ♖e5 (or 29...♖c6 30 ♗xa6 ♘xb6 31 ♗b5 and wins) **30 ♕b3! ♖b8 31 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 32 ♕c4! ♗d2 33 ♗c7 ♖c5**



34 ♕xc5! ♘xc5 35 ♗xb8 ♗xc3 36 bxc3 ♘fxe4 37 c4

As a result White has just an extra pawn in the endgame – and no saving chances at all for the opponent!

37...♘d7 38 ♗c7 g6 39 ♗e6 ♘ec5 40 ♗xd7 ♘xd7 41 ♗d6 1-0

In an interview after the match Karpov magnanimously admitted that the 3-0 score did not reflect the real, purely chess strengths of the two contestants – rather, it mirrored Polugayevsky's psychological state. Here one involuntarily remembers Fischer's statement after his match with Taimanov: 'The 6-0 result was too high... The struggle was much more difficult... It is easier to be a gentleman when you win...' But one can certainly agree with Tal: 'In the competitive, psychological sense, Karpov was head and shoulders above his opponent.'

This fact was confirmed by Polugayevsky himself: 'Now, with the benefit of hindsight, I see very clearly the errors I made in preparing for the match. I devoted too much time to purely chess work, and did not concentrate sufficiently on the need for correct psychological preparation.'

However, there was also 'something else', which was described well by grandmaster Alexei Suetin: 'I don't want to say that the outcome of the match was not influenced in any way by either Polugayevsky's psychological condition, or his opening repertoire. Of course they influenced it. But the main reason for such a heavy defeat was the play of the winner. Karpov has an astounding technique, which is at the service of a healthy practicality. He plays easily and quickly, he accurately evaluates a position, and one gains the impression that Karpov's analytical scales are far more sensitive than those of his opponents. It has been remarked many times that Karpov has little experience. This is so. But notice how quickly the grandmaster gains this experience. When he is playing, Karpov the student is all the time learning. And the teachers, when they capitulate, give him high marks.'

Many of those who witnessed this short match were left with the feeling that they had witnessed a minor miracle (what would they think after the semi-final!). 'But the most staggering thing is that Polugayevsky's failure in no way affected his attitude towards me,' Karpov recalls. 'On the contrary: the worse things went for him, the more courteous and benevolent he became to me. With no one else did I ever discuss in such detail and so openly a game just played. These analyses drew us very close. One of the paradoxical results of the match was that I gained Polugayevsky's friendship. If only all matches would end in this way!'

Leap into the Unknown

Karpov's next encounter – his semi-final match with Spassky (Leningrad, spring 1974) deserves to be covered in the greatest detail: this was one of the most dramatic chess events of those years, fully comparable with a match for the world crown. The young, rapidly improving chess talent was opposed by the 37-year-old ex-world champion, who had just brilliantly won the USSR Championship and his quarter-final match with Byrne. They played up to four wins, but with a limit of 20 games.

The other semi-final brought together Petrosian and Korchnoi, and so at the time Karpov was compared with the young D'Artagnan, who had joined up with the three

musketeers. Roshal: 'But before the semi-final match Spassky was nevertheless considered the favourite. It appeared to many that in the quarter-final it was not that Karpov had beaten Polugayevsky, but rather that the latter had somehow beaten himself. Only Botvinnik smiled: "Just as 'inexplicably' he will also beat Spassky." And the cautious Petrosian predicted a struggle "no less interesting than a clash between any one of the Candidates and Fischer". But the majority of the forecasts anticipated a win for Spassky.'

The FIDE President Max Euwe, who arrived for the opening of the match, was no exception. At a press conference he confirmed that he gave some preference to Spassky. 'Now he has once again captured his earlier form' (regarding which Botvinnik remarked that it wasn't at all becoming for the FIDE President to 'play at forecasting'). True, Euwe promptly added: 'However, in the development of talented young players, qualitative leaps can take place. It is hard to guess whether Karpov will now make such a leap. If he does, then I would not rule out the possibility of him even winning the title of world champion.'

But what did Karpov himself think about the forthcoming match? 'I did not even try to guess how it would turn out. Whereas I could compare myself with Polugayevsky, Spassky was a weight that I had never before lifted,' he was to say years later. 'Neither before nor after this match have I worked so much on chess. The general conception was developed, the psychological strategy was developed; weak points in my opponent's armour and fencing skill were sought – and methods were developed, in order to try and beat him here, or land a strong blow there. I endeavoured to forget about my deep respect for Spassky, I endeavoured not to think about his grandiosity. I told myself: before you is a very difficult, but unusual task... A great help was provided by the material from Spassky's match with Fischer. Both chess, and psychological material.'

Indeed, the Spassky-Fischer match (1972) had emphasised the need for a serious study of the opening. But Fischer had retired from chess, and the echoes of Reykjavik gradually quietened down. The sharp opening duels of that match began to be forgotten, and preparation again reduced to a study of theoretical reviews in the magazines *Shakhmaty v SSSR* and *Shakhmatny Bulletin* and an examination of games in *Informator*. As before, the opening lines used by Spassky against equally 'erudite' opponents enabled him to obtain complicated middlegame positions, in which the main role was played by improvisation and intuition.

But this was a short period of calm before a radical revision of the methods of opening study. The Spassky-Karpov match was that epochal event, after which the enormous significance of opening proficiency became clear to everyone. Spassky prepared for the match in the old-fashioned way, and this method proved inadequate, quickly leaving him effectively 'without an opening'. Whereas, by contrast, for two and a half months Karpov and his trainers polished their planned opening systems, studying not so much variations, as the conceptual fundamentals of opening lines, their middlegame and sometimes their endgame positions. Karpov worked for 10-12 hours a day! Spassky had no conception of the strength of the grandmaster against whom he had been drawn...

On this occasion Karpov was helped by Furman and Razuvaev (there was no Balashov: Spassky had turned to him for help, not knowing that he was in the opponent's team, and Yuri decided to observe neutrality). Two major surprises were prepared: with Black – the Caro-Kann Defence, and with White – a partial switch to 1 d4, i.e. 'serving' from either side. The result? 'Throughout the match Spassky was unable to adapt properly to me; my opening play was very uncomfortable for him. He, like Polugayevsky before him, was unable to obtain his favourite positions.' (Karpov)

The start of the match appeared to confirm the forecasts. Because of a bad cold, Anatoly was forced to take a time-out even before the first game. 'A day later they sat down at the board: a self-confident, sun-tanned (from a mountain resort), athletic-looking man, and a pale, thin youth, not yet recovered from his cold and hence slightly hunched,' describes Roshal, but when before his eyes Karpov lost with White in a Sicilian Defence (*Volume 3, Game No.83*), he noticed a curious detail: 'Leaving for home after the hopeless adjournment session, Furman was upset but he did not forget to remind Karpov that Fischer also lost the first game to Spassky, and this did not prevent him from winning the match.'

And this was the path followed by Karpov, who keenly sensed his opponent's state of mind. 'The win in the first game did Spassky a bad service, just like his win in the first game against Fischer. He decided that everything was clear, and he calmed down and relaxed.'

In the 2nd game, in reply to 1 e4, Anatoly employed the Caro-Kann Defence for the first time in his life! And his complacently inclined opponent decided to defer the opening debate, by offering a draw as early as the 17th move. Botvinnik: 'Both Spassky and the "experts" had no doubts about the outcome. This decision was symptomatic: the present-day Spassky wants to win with the minimum of effort; he is not keyed up for intense exertion, and he does not press himself.'

For the further course of the match the 3rd game was very important.

Game 58
A.Karpov-B.Spassky
Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 3rd game
King's Indian Defence E91

1 d4!?

Everyone was expecting 1 e4 and an improvement for White in the Sicilian Defence, but Spassky was given a new surprise: Karpov had begun a game in this way only a few times in his life! Realising that his young opponent was prepared for the main lines of his opening repertoire, the ex-world champion had to choose at the board between those that he had already employed, and something that was new, but familiar only in general terms.

I can imagine what Spassky was thinking about during those moments. He never aimed to be an openings expert, regarding himself as king of the middlegame. His long-standing trainer Igor Bondarevsky 'did not overrate' the role of opening knowledge, but thought that the main thing was to have a clear head before a game, and that about the opening it was sufficient to have a general impression and, ideally, a knowledge of a few subtleties.

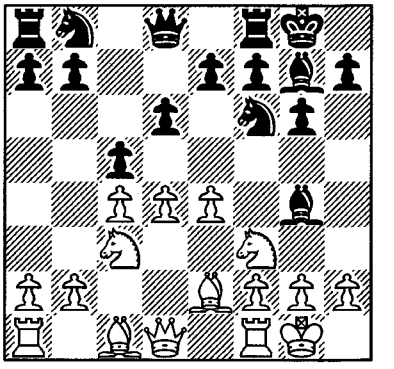
1...♘f6 2 c4 g6

A surprise in return? Not wishing to check what the Karpov team had prepared in the Nimzo-Indian Defence or the Queen's Indian, Spassky began remembering his King's Indian games, trying to find a half-forgotten set-up and some ideas which could be used.

3 ♘c3 ♗g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 ♗e2 c5

Spassky is afraid of preparations in the main lines, and instead of 6...e5 he replies with a rare variation of the King's Indian. However, this was hardly a good decision. It allowed Karpov to treat the positions, arising in a new opening for him, using the general considerations by which he was guided in similar situations.

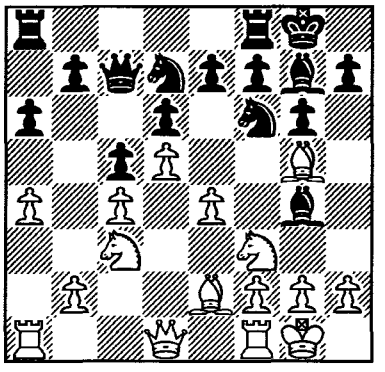
7 0-0 ♗g4



8 d5

Karpov's choice was not hard to guess. When studying Polugayevsky's games, he, of course, noticed how splendidly the latter handled such positions as White, and he adopted his method. In addition, Karpov liked to block the centre with d4-d5 in the Ruy Lopez, and this experience came in useful in the King's Indian.

8...♘bd7 9 ♗g5 a6 10 a4 ♕c7



11 ♕d2

The exchange of bishops suggested by Botvinnik – 11 ♘d2 ♗xe2 12 ♕xe2 – promises little after 12...h6 13 ♗f4 ♕a5. Karpov provokes a different exchange, reckoning that sooner or later his light-squared bishop will gain scope.

11...♖ae8 12 h3 ♗xf3 13 ♗xf3 e6 14 b3?!

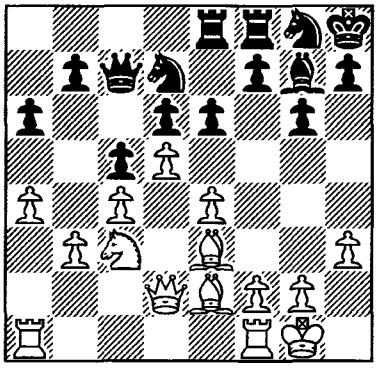
The attempt to open up the game immediately – 14 dxe6 fxe6 15 ♖ad1 would have been parried by 15...♘e5! 16 ♗e2 ♘f7 with equality. And Karpov decides to wait, for the moment accumulating small pluses. But instead of 14 b3, which deprives his knight of support, it was better to play 14 a5 (seizing space and, above all, restricting the black queen) 14...♔h8 15 ♖a2 exd5 16 cxd5 c4 17 ♖a4 ♘e5 18 ♗e2.

14...♔h8! (the start of a standard regrouping)

15 ♗e3

For the moment the bishop is doing nothing at g5, and White withdraws it to a position which soon proves unpleasant for the opponent. Botvinnik suggested 15 ♖ac1, but it is not clear what White can boast of after 15...♕b6 16 ♕f4 ♘g8.

15...♘g8 16 ♗e2



The second bishop also begins looking in the direction of the queenside, just in case making way for the f2-pawn.

16...e5!?

An unexpected, but quite logical decision: Black is counting on the effect of ...f7-f5 and the exchange of the dark-squared bishops. Another way of fighting for equality was the opening of the centre – 16...♕a5 17 ♖ac1 exd5. The symmetric 18 exd5 would have allowed Black counter-chances after 18...f5 – 19 g3 ♖e7 20 ♖fe1 ♖fe8, or 19 ♗d3 ♕b4 (19...f4? 20 ♘e4!) 20 ♗f4 ♘e5. His problems are more difficult after 18 cxd5, although he has a choice:

1) 18...♗xc3 19 ♖xc3 ♖xe4 20 ♕b2 ♘gf6 21 ♗f3 ♖e7. This direct attempt to hold the position involves an exchange sacrifice for some compensation: 22 ♗g5 ♖e5 23 ♗f4 ♔g8 24 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 25 ♖b1 ♕b4, or 22 ♗g4 ♔g8 23 ♗xd7 ♘xd5 24 ♗d2 ♖xd7 25 ♖f3 ♕d8 26 ♗h6 f5 27 ♖d1 ♘f6 28 ♗xf8 ♕xf8;

2) 18...♘gf6 19 ♖fe1 ♕b4, launching into complications, which after a mass elimination of pieces may conclude in a prosaic endgame: 20 ♗f4 (20 f3 ♘h5, and Black has a reasonable variation of the Modern Benoni) 20...♘xe4 (20...♘e5 21 ♕c2! is a variation of

the Modern Benoni which is now more pleasant for White) 21 ♘xe4 ♖xe4 22 ♕xb4 cxb4 23 ♗xd6 ♖fe8 24 f3! ♖xe2! 25 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 26 ♖c8+ ♗f8 27 ♗xf8 ♘xf8 28 ♖xf8+ ♔g7 29 ♖b8 a5! (but not 29...♖e7? 30 ♔f2 ♖d7 31 ♔e3 ♖xd5 32 ♖xb7 a5 33 ♖b5 ♖d1 34 ♖xa5 ♖b1 35 ♔d4 ♖xb3 36 ♔c4 ♖b2 37 ♖b5 ♖xg2 38 a5 and wins) 30 ♖xb7 ♖e3 31 ♖b5 ♖xb3 32 ♖xa5 ♖a3 33 d6 ♖d3. Here the chances of a draw are very real, for example: 34 ♖b5 ♖xd6 35 ♖xb4 ♖d2, or 34 ♖a6 b3 35 ♖b6 ♔f6 36 a5 ♔e6 37 a6 ♖xd6 38 a7 ♖xb6 39 a8♕ b2 40 ♕a2 ♔f6 41 ♕b1 h5 – with such a queen White cannot win.

17 g4

Strategically a very committing move. Karpov tries to restrict the opponent's counterplay, reckoning that the weakening of his kingside is unimportant, since the black pieces are defensively placed. Indeed, the g2-g4 advance is an important part of White's plan, but for maximum effect the most appropriate moment for it needs to be chosen.

Again, as on the 14th move, 17 a5 f5! 18 f3 was more advisable, and if 18...♕d8! (18...♘gf6 19 g4!) the prophylactic 19 ♔h2! is strong, in order after 19...♕h4 to have 20 g3 (with the sequel 20...♕e7 21 g4! ♕h4 22 ♕e1! ♕xe1 23 ♖axe1 ♗h6 24 ♗xh6 ♘xh6 25 exf5 gxf5 26 ♗d1 ♖e7 27 ♗c2 ♖g7 28 ♖g1), while if 19...♘gf6 this is the right time to play for restriction – 20 g4!, not allowing the activation of the queen. Here 19...f4 is ineffective, since without his light-squared bishop Black cannot create any serious threats to the enemy king, whereas White's offensive on the other flank will develop unchecked.

17...♕d8?!

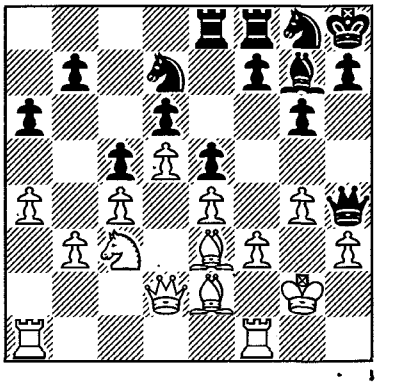
Spassky sticks to his plan, but the immediate 17...f5! was stronger, and after 18 f3 (if 18 gxf5 gxf5 19 exf5, then Black has 19...e4! 20 f3 exf3 21 ♖xf3 – 21 ♗xf3? ♖xe3! – 21...♕a5 22 ♖c1 ♘e7 with strong counterplay) 18...♕d8 19 ♔g2 it could have led to a 'dead draw': 19...f4! 20 ♗f2 a5! 21 h4 h6 22 ♘b5 ♘b8.

18 ♔g2 ♕h4

The penultimate link of the planned set-up: the h3-pawn is blocked, and if 19 ♗g5 there follows 19...♗h6! With the king at g2, the attempt by 18...f5 to block the position completely, which was successful a move earlier (hoping for 19 f3 f4! 20 ♗f2 a5!), on this occasion would have led to an advantage for White: 19 gxf5! gxf5 20 exf5 e4! 21 f3! exf3+ 22 ♗xf3 ♘gf6 23 a5 ♘e5 24 ♗g5 ♘f7 25 ♗f4.

19 f3

The turning point in the game, which for a long time remained undisclosed.



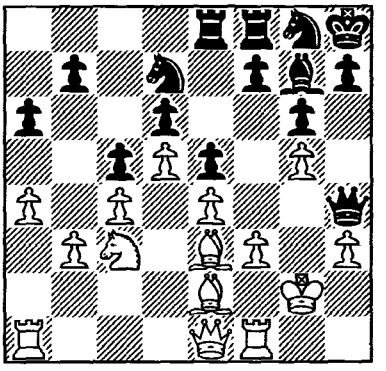
19...♗h6?

One can only try and guess why Spassky faltered at the height of the battle. Perhaps he thought that, with the queens on, Black did not have to fear the further advance of the g4-pawn?

19...f6 20 ♗f2 ♗h6 21 ♕d3 ♕g5 22 h4! ♕d2 23 ♖fd1 ♕xd3 24 ♗xd3 was hardly tolerable, but the thematic 19...f5! would have maintained the tension: after 20 a5 ♗h6! 21 ♗xh6 (21 g5? f4!; 21 exf5 gxf5 22 ♗d3 e4!) 21...♘xh6 22 ♕e1 ♕d8! Black has active counterplay, while 20 ♕e1 ♕xe1 21 ♖axe1 did not promise the same stunning effect as in the game, since the exchange of the dark-squared bishops would have followed – 21...♗h6! 22 ♗xh6 ♘xh6. It would appear that the passivity of the e2-bishop does not allow White any chances of success: 23 a5 fxg4 24 hxg4 (24 fxg4 g5 25 ♘d1 ♖xf1 26 ♖xf1 ♖f8) 24...♘f7! 25 ♖b1 ♖c8 26 b4 cxb4

27 ♖xb4 ♘c5 28 ♖fb1 ♖c7 29 ♘a4 ♘xa4 30 ♖xa4 ♖e8 31 ♖ab4 ♖ee7 32 ♖b6 ♔g7, and things end in a draw. But 23 exf5! gxf5 24 a5 would have slightly opened the kingside and left Karpov with real chances of an advantage.

20 g5! ♗g7 21 ♗f2 ♕f4 22 ♗e3 ♕h4 23 ♕e1!



Unexpected and very effective. After the exchange of queens, the threats to White's king disappear, and he suddenly acquires a superiority in force on the queenside, to where Black, squeezed into two ranks, cannot quickly transfer his reserves. The threat of exchanging the dark-squared bishops can now be forgotten about, the wedge at g5 hinders the normal movements of the enemy pieces, and during the time that Black spends on the exchange of this harmful pawn, White will open the b-file with decisive effect.

23...♕xe1 24 ♖fxe1 h6

Or 24...f6 25 h4. Black is unable to close the queenside (24...a5? 25 ♘b5), and he can only wait for the unavoidable breaching of his defences.

25 h4 hxg5 (White also has an overwhelming position after 25...f6 26 ♖h1) **26 hxg5 ♘e7**

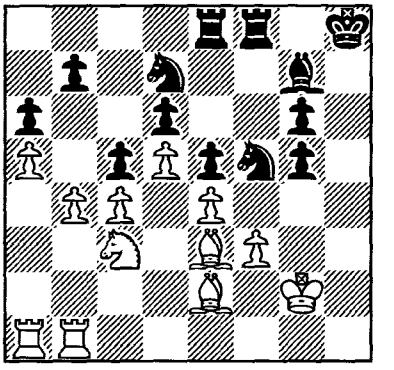
By just a single chess instant Black is too late with ...a6-a5.

27 a5!

After this the game is effectively over. Spassky's desperate resistance can no longer change anything.

27...f6 28 ♖eb1 fxg5 29 b4! (the g5-pawn will not run away) **29...♘f5!?**

Realising that, given the normal development of events, there is no chance of saving the game (29...g4 30 bxc5! ♘xc5 31 ♗xc5 dxc5 32 ♖xb7), Spassky sacrifices his knight, to sharply change the character of the play.



30 ♗xg5!

Seeing that 30 exf5 e4! 31 ♗d2 exf3+ 32 ♗xf3 gxf5 sharpens the play and allows the opponent some chances, Karpov takes another psychologically subtle decision. He allows the black knight to establish itself in the centre of the board, where it proves to be in splendid isolation, not influencing the play in any way. As a result, the opponent still has no hope of counterplay. In deciding whether or not to take, Karpov spent just four minutes!

It is interesting that for computer programs the continuations 30 exf5 and 30 ♗xg5 are roughly equivalent. But the capture of the piece should have won more quickly, as demonstrated by a continuation of the above variation: 33 ♗h5 ♖c8 34 b5 g4 35 ♖h1 ♔g8 36 ♗g6 ♗d4 37 ♗h7+ ♔g7 38 ♗h5 f4 39 ♖g5+! and wins.

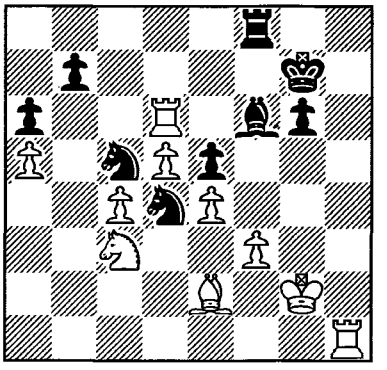
30...♘d4 (if 30...♗h6, then 31 exf5! ♗xg5 32 ♘e4 is extremely unpleasant) **31 bxc5 ♘xc5 32 ♖b6!**

The start of the decisive invasion. The d6-pawn is under fire, but again Karpov is not in a hurry to take it, first methodically strengthening the placing of his pieces.

32...♗f6 33 ♖h1+!

The most accurate way. After 33 ♖xd6 Botvinnik saw 33...♔g7 as being a last chance of saving the game, although it could only be a question of prolonging the suffering: 34 ♖xf6 ♖xf6 35 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 36 ♗d1 ♘d3 37 ♖b1 ♖e7 38 ♘e2 g5 39 ♖b6+ ♔g7 40 ♘xd4 exd4 41 ♗a4! and wins.

33...♔g7 34 ♗h6+ ♔g8 35 ♗xf8 ♖xf8 36 ♖xd6 ♔g7



37 ♗d1!

The hitherto slumbering bishop helps one of the knights to be exchanged. Its finest hour will arrive 10 moves later!

37...♗e7 (if 37...♗d8, then 38 ♘a4 ♗c7 39 ♘xc5 ♗xd6 40 ♘xb7 ♗b4 41 c5 is convincing) **38 ♖b6 ♗d8 39 ♖b1 ♖f7 40 ♘a4 ♘d3 41 ♘b6 g5 42 ♘c8!**

An elegant solution. Now if 42...g4 there is the strong reply 43 ♘d6 gxf3+ 44 ♔f1, and the fine-looking knight in the centre is unable to help Black.

42...♘c5 43 ♘d6 ♖d7 44 ♘f5+ ♘xf5 45 exf5 e4

The sealed move. Why Spassky came along to the resumption is the last mystery of this wonderful battle.

46 fxe4 ♘xe4 47 ♗a4 ♖e7 48 ♖be1! ♘c5 49 ♖xe7+ ♗xe7 50 ♗c2 ♗d8 51 ♖a1 ♔f6 52 d6! ♔d7 53 ♖b1 ♔e5 54 ♖d1 ♔f4 55 ♖e1 1-0

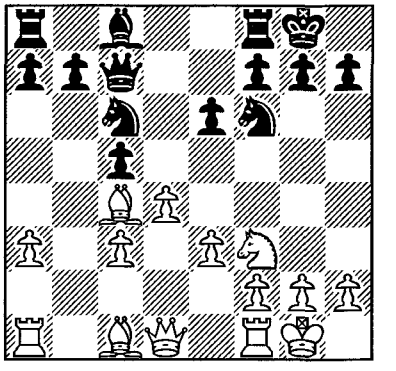
Black was punished for his indecisiveness in carrying out a basically good plan.

The score became 1-1, and Karpov gained a new lease of life. In the 4th game Spassky again did not gain any advantage against the Caro-Kann Defence and satisfied himself with a slightly inferior ending – draw on the 43rd move.

Every match has its culminating games, when the opponents come face to face, displaying all their ability. Here the 5th game was one of these. On this occasion Spassky was not afraid to engage in a crucial battle in the main direction – in an opening set-up for which the opponent was undoubtedly very heavily prepared.

Game 59
A.Karpov-B.Spassky
Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 5th game
Nimzo-Indian Defence E59

1 d4 (again!) **1...♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♗b4 4 ♘f3** (4 a3 – *Game No.4*; 4 e3 – *Game Nos.29 and 73*) **4...c5 5 e3 d5 6 ♗d3 0-0 7 0-0 ♘c6** (7...dxc4 – *Game No.55*) **8 a3 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♕c7**



This is one of the opening *tabiyas*, the handling of which determined the class of a player at that time. For richness of content it is comparable with the classical set-ups in the Spanish or the Queen's Gambit. The basic conflict in the position is determined by the problematic material balance 'two bishops against

bishop and knight'. Each side has his pluses (White's big pawn mass in the centre in return for the free development of Black's pieces and his defect-free pawn structure), which makes the outcome dependent only on the mastery of the two players. In our day the evaluations of many opening variations depend on the subtleties of the struggle of two bishops against bishop and knight.

11 ♗d3

At that time the most fashionable continuation. Botvinnik considered 11 ♗e2 to be more interesting, but this is a matter of taste. After 11...e5 12 ♕c2 ♖d8 13 ♗b2 ♗g4! 14 dxe5 ♘xe5 15 c4 a model game is Khalifman-Kramnik (Linares 2000), which incorporates the most typical middlegame features: 15...♘xf3+ 16 gxf3 ♗h3 17 ♖fd1 ♕c6! 18 ♕c3 ♘e8 19 ♔h1 ♗e6 20 ♖g1 f6! 21 ♖g3 ♖d7 22 ♖ag1 ♖ad8 23 ♗c1 ♗f5! 24 e4 ♗g6 25 h4 ♘c7 with an excellent game for Black.

11 ♗a2 is also often played, as, say, in Gelfand-Korchnoi (*Game No.46*). And in recent times 11 ♗b2 e5 12 h3 has been popular, when after 12...e4 13 ♘d2 ♘a5 14 ♗a2 ♗f5 15 c4! ♖fe8 16 d5 ♘d7 17 f4! exf3 18 ♕xf3 ♗g6 19 h4! White seizes the initiative (Kramnik-Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2001), and therefore 12...♗f5 13 ♕e2 ♖ad8 is better, maintaining the tension in the centre.

11...e5 12 ♕c2 ♖e8

In the first Petrosian-Spassky match (20th matchgame, Moscow 1966) Black lost a tempo – 12...♗g4 13 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♕xe5 15 f3 ♗d7, and after 16 a4 White seized the initiative.

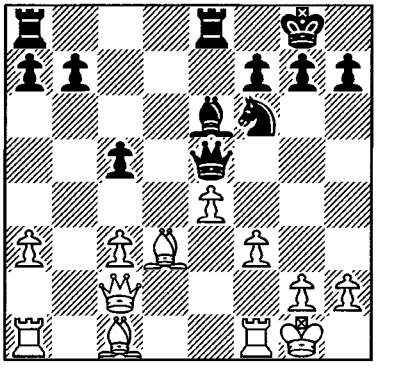
13 ♘xe5

The sharp variation 13 e4 exd4 14 cxd4 ♗g4! (Bronstein-Euwe, Zurich Candidates 1953) merely demonstrates the solidity of Black's defences and may lead to a pretty draw by perpetual check: 15 ♕xc5 ♗xf3 16 gxf3 ♕d7! 17 ♗e3 ♘xe4 18 ♗xe4 ♖xe4 19 fxe4 ♕g4+.

Another line – 15 e5 ♗xf3 16 exf6 ♘xd4 17 ♗xh7+ ♔h8 18 fxg7+ ♔xg7 19 ♗b2 ♖ad8 20 gxf3 (at one time it was thought that 20 ♖fc1 leads to a draw – 20...♖h8 21 ♕xc5+ ♕xc5 22 ♖xc5 ♔xh7 23 ♗xd4 ♖hg8, but after 20...♖e5! 21 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 22 gxf3 ♖g5+ 23 ♔f1 ♕xh2 the threat of ...♖g2 forces White to agree to a lost endgame: 24 ♔e2 ♕xh7) 20...♖h8 21 ♔h1 brought White success in the game I.Sokolov-Kasparov (Wijk aan Zee 1999), but only because of 21...♖xh7?

Apparently, my series of seven successive wins in that tournament was destined to be broken... And yet a quarter of a century earlier this variation had been analysed by the Azerbaijan junior team, and I knew the correct prescription: 21...♔f8!! 22 ♕e4?! f5! 23 ♕h4 ♖xh7 24 ♕f6+ ♔e8 25 ♖fe1+ ♔d7 26 ♖e5 ♔c8 27 ♗xd4 cxd4 28 ♕xf5+ ♔b8. In the final position things are difficult for White, and my team-mate R.Tavadian won a game in this way in the All-Union Schoolchildren's Spartakiad (1974). He remembered perfectly well 'what to do', whereas my memory unexpectedly let me down! After 21...♔f8 White has to think in terms of a draw, and it is still attainable: 22 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 23 ♖fc1 ♖h4 (23...b6 24 ♔g2) 24 ♕xc5+ etc.

13...♘xe5 14 dxe5 ♕xe5 15 f3 ♗e6 16 e4



16...♖ad8

Another way to equalise was later demonstrated by Spassky in his match with Portisch (4th matchgame, Geneva 1977): 16...c4 17 ♗e2 ♕c5+ 18 ♔h1 ♘d7 19 ♗f4 b5.

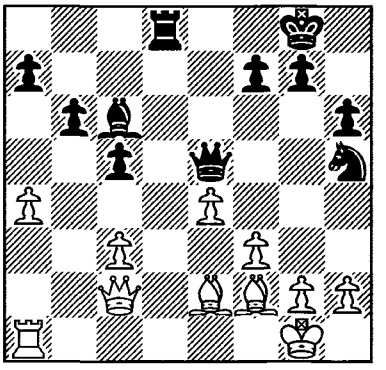
17 ♗e2

The time to advance – 17 f4?! ♕c7 18 e5 – has not yet come: after 18...c4 19 ♗e2 ♕c5+ 20 ♔h1 ♗g4! 21 ♗xg4 ♘xg4 22 ♖b1 b6 23 h3 ♘h6 Black's position is clearly better.

17...b6 18 a4

In the first instance White needs to activate his dark-squared bishop, which has no opponent, but this is not easy to do: 18 ♗e3 ♘d5!, while if 18 c4 Black can choose between the double-edged 18...♕d4+ 19 ♔h1 ♕xa1 20 ♗b2 ♕xf1+ 21 ♗xf1 ♘d7 22 a4 ♘b8, and the more solid 18...♘h5 19 ♗b2 ♕g5 20 ♔h1 ♘f4 21 ♗f1 h5 22 ♔h1 h4.

18...♗d7 19 ♖d1 ♗c6 20 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 21 ♗e3 h6! (of course, not 21...♘d5? 22 ♕d2! ♕xc3 23 ♖d1!) **22 ♗f2 ♘h5**



White has retained the two bishops, but he has not managed to activate them, and so there is no question of him having any advantage. Black's position is solid, whereas White's pawn islands on the queenside may become a source of concern. Karpov, having no experience of playing such positions, continues to carry out a plan which appears to promise an advantage...

23 g3

From this point onwards a certain superficiality is apparent in Karpov's decisions, as a result of which his opponent's active possibilities increase little by little, although for the moment the dynamic balance is not disturbed. Simple equality would have been retained by 23 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 24 ♗xd1 (Kotov), or 23 ♗f1 ♘f4 24 ♗g3 g5 (Botvinnik).

23...g5!

An unexpected and brilliant reply. It transpires that the threat of f3-f4 is a phantom, whereas the weakening of the f3-e4 pawn pair is a reality.

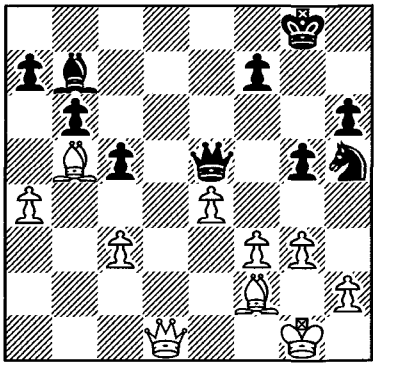
24 ♗b5

White now needs to devote some attention to defence. Thus 24 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 25 ♕xd1 would have handed the initiative to Black: 25...g4! 26 ♕d8+ ♔g7 27 ♕h4 gxf3 28 ♗xf3 ♘f6 29 ♗e3 h5, whereas getting rid of his weak pawn by 24 a5 g4 25 axb6 axb6 would have maintained parity.

24...♗b7! 25 ♖d1

Again White does not prevent the preparation of ...g5-g4. The same exchange of rooks after the preparatory 25 a5 g4 would have ensured a simple draw: 26 ♖d1 ♖xd1+ 27 ♕xd1 gxf3 28 axb6 axb6 29 ♕d8+ ♔g7 30 ♕xb6 ♕xc3 31 ♕xc5 ♕xc5 32 ♗xc5 ♗xe4.

25...♖xd1+ 26 ♕xd1



26...♘f6!

An excellent decision. If White allows ...g5-g4, the e4-pawn may fall, exposing the long light-squared diagonal, on which the bishop at b7 will dominate. And Karpov faltered...

27 g4

This desire to suppress the threat is too risky, whereas 27 a5 would still have prevented it (27...g4? 28 a6!) and enabled White to maintain equality without difficulty: 27...♔g7 28 a6

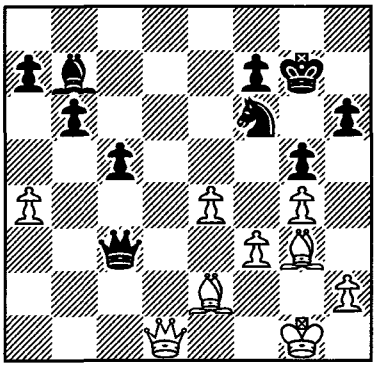
♗c8 29 ♕d8 ♗e6 30 ♕d3 g4 31 ♗c6 gxf3 32 ♕xf3, or 27...bxa5 28 ♕d8+ ♔g7 29 ♕xa5 ♘xe4.

27...♕xc3 28 ♗g3?

And this is a serious mistake, which places White on the verge of defeat. The incautious 28 ♕d8+ ♔g7 29 ♕c7? was bad on account of 29...♕xf3! 30 ♕xb7 ♘xg4 31 ♗g3 ♘e3 (Tal), and only by driving the queen away from the f3-pawn – 28 ♗e1! could White have maintained the balance: 28...♕b2 29 ♗g3 ♔g7 30 ♕d6.

28...♔g7! 29 ♗e2

The queen exchange 29 ♕d3 ♕xd3 30 ♗xd3 would have eliminated the threat to the f3-pawn, but 30...♗c6! would have forced White either to go in for a new, unfavourable exchange – 31 ♗b5 ♗xb5 32 axb5, when after 32...♘d7 he has an unpleasant endgame (for example, 33 ♔f2 ♔f6 34 f4 ♘f8! 35 ♔e3 ♘e6 36 fxg5+ hxg5 37 ♗b8 ♘f8! 38 e5 ♔e6 39 ♗xa7 ♘d7 40 ♔e4 f6! and wins), or allow Black to create two connected passed pawns after 31 a5 ♘d7!



29...♗c6?

The key moment of the game, and possibly of the entire match! After conducting a complicated middlegame splendidly and gaining real winning chances, Spassky commits a blunder – a one-move oversight.

Black would have gained a great and apparently decisive advantage by 29...h5! White cannot maintain his defensive construction, since 30 h3? is met by the crushing 30...♘xe4!, while here the saving counterattack 30 ♕d6 does not in fact save him: 30...hxg4 31 ♗e5 ♕e1+ 32 ♗f1 ♕e3+ 33 ♔h1 ♕xf3+ 34 ♗g2 ♕f2 35 ♕xf6+ ♕xf6 36 ♗xf6+ ♔xf6 37 e5+ ♔xe5 38 ♗xb7 c4 and wins (Tal). All that remains is to go into an endgame – 30 ♗e1 ♕b2 31 gxh5! (31 h3 hxg4 32 hxg4 ♗c6 or 31 h4 hxg4 32 hxg5 ♘h5! 33 ♕d6 ♕c1 34 ♔f1 gxf3 35 ♗xf3 ♘f4 36 ♕f6+ ♔g8 37 ♕d8+ ♔h7 is totally bad for White) 31...♘xh5 32 ♕d8 ♘f6 33 ♕d2 ♕xd2 34 ♗xd2, and it is hard for White to avoid defeat: 34...♗c6 35 a5 ♔g6 36 ♗d3 ♘d7 37 ♗c3 f6 and Black wins.

30 ♕d6!

This thrust, creating the terrible threat of 31 ♗e5, was obviously missed by Spassky. He is forced to exchange queens immediately, losing all hopes of success.

30...♕d4+ 31 ♕xd4 cxd4 32 a5! bxa5!

After 32...♘d7 33 axb6 axb6 34 ♗f2 it is not easy to draw against the awakened bishops. But with a black pawn reaching a4, the equality is obvious.

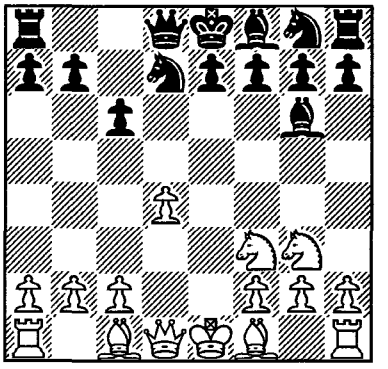
33 ♗e5 ♔g6 34 ♗xd4 ♘e8 35 ♗xa7 h5 36 gxh5+ ♔xh5 37 ♔f2 ♔g6 38 ♗d3 ♘g7 39 ♗b6 a4 40 ♗c5 ♘e6 41 ♗d6 ♔h5 ½-½

An important game! Of course, this missed opportunity vexed and disappointed Spassky. Even so, being at that time the most experienced match fighter in the world, he was able to compose himself and arrive at the next game still full of optimism. This was another important, key game. On the 23rd move Karpov gave his opponent another surprise...

'Even when I levelled the score, Spassky still did not understand what was happening and he remained in a state of Olympian certainty of his own superiority and overall success,' Karpov recalls. 'Only the 6th game awakened him. I realised this from looking at him: this was already a different Spassky – seriously wounded, flustered, not understanding what was happening.'

Game 60
B.Spassky-A.Karpov
Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 6th game
Caro-Kann Defence B18

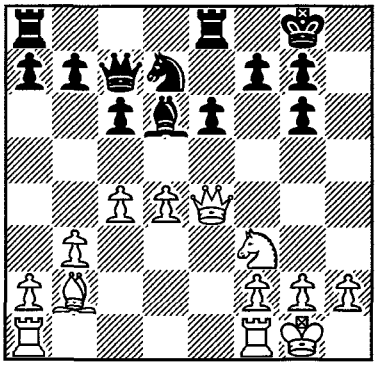
1 e4 c6 (of course!) **2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♗f5 5 ♘g3 ♗g6 6 ♘f3** (6 h4! – *Game No.62*) **6...♘d7**



7 ♗d3 e6 8 0-0 ♘gf6 9 c4 ♗d6 10 b3 0-0 11 ♗b2 ♕c7

Or 11...c5 12 ♗xg6 hxg6 13 ♖e1 ♕c7 14 dxc5 ♗xc5 15 ♕c2 ♖fd8 16 ♘e4 ♘xe4 17 ♕xe4 ½-½ (2nd game).

12 ♗xg6 hxg6 13 ♕e2 ♖fe8 14 ♘e4 ♘xe4 15 ♕xe4



Spassky's opening repairs had clearly been delayed, and for already the third 'White' game he was forced to play a tedious role in an alien scenario. To force the opponent to play what he does not like is a great achievement in a match struggle.

The resulting middlegame does not promise any great adventures. Neither side has any weaknesses, or any difficulties in the development of their forces. For the moment no clashes are anticipated, and unhurried manoeuvring is perfectly logical.

15...♗e7

Black continues his waiting strategy, emphasising the solidity of his position. He even avoids the logical freeing move 15...e5. If now 16 c5, then Botvinnik's suggestion 16...♗e7! 17 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 18 dxe5 ♗xc5 is good, while after 16 ♖ae1! ♘f6 17 ♕h4 one can agree with Karpov's opinion that White has a slight initiative, although after 17...e4 18 ♘g5 ♗f4 19 ♖e2 e3! 20 fxe3 (20 f3 b5! 21 g3 ♗xg5 22 ♕xg5 bxc4 23 bxc4 ♕b6 24 ♗c3 ♕a6 with equality) 20...♖xe3 21 ♖ef2 ♗xg5 22 ♕xg5 ♖e7! it gradually fades: 23 ♕h4 ♖ae8 24 ♖xf6 gxf6 25 d5 g5 26 ♕f2 cxd5 27 ♗xf6 ♖e6 28 cxd5 ♖d6 29 ♗xg5 ♖xd5.

16 ♖ad1 ♖ad8 17 ♖fe1 ♕a5!

This activation could also have been carried out after 17...♗f6 18 ♗c1 (if now 18...e5, then Botvinnik's reply 19 ♗b2! is strong): 18...♕a5 19 a4 ♕f5 with equality.

18 a3 ♕f5 19 ♕e2

After the exchange of queens White has no chances of an advantage, but now it transpires that the manoeuvre of the black queen was a link in an elegant activation plan.

19...g5! 20 h3

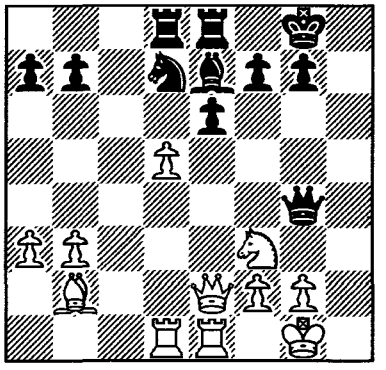
Spassky made this move very quickly, deferring the d4-d5 breakthrough until better times. And indeed, after 20 d5 exd5 White is not promised any benefits by either 21 ♘d4 ♕h7 (or 21...♕e4! Botvinnik) 22 cxd5 cxd5 23 ♕b5 ♗d6!, or 21 cxd5 g4! (Karpov) 22 ♘d4 ♕xd5 23 ♕xg4 ♘f6.

20...g4 21 hxg4 ♕xg4 22 d5?!

At first sight a timely advance, since after the double pawn exchange it will be advantageous for White to give up his queen for two

rooks. Karpov's evaluation was very deep: 'White's position is slightly freer thanks to the c4-d4 pawn pair, but the opening of the centre deprives him of this, perhaps his only plus. 22 ♖d3 ♗f6 23 ♖e3 was better.' I think, nevertheless, that here too after 23...♕h5 one can talk about equality.

22...cxd5 23 cxd5



23...e5!!

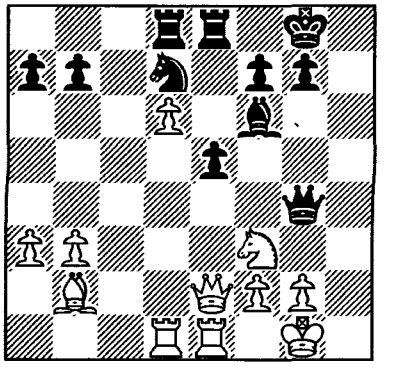
One of the best moves in the match. I remember it made an enormous impression on me. Its strength was clearly underestimated by Spassky, who was possibly hoping for 23...♗d6? 24 dxe6 ♖xe6 25 ♕xe6! fxe6 26 ♖xd6.

Of course, the pawn sacrifice is only imaginary: 24 ♘xe5?! ♕xe2 25 ♖xe2 ♗d6 26 ♖de1 ♘xe5 27 ♗xe5 ♗xa3, but Black leaves his opponent with a seemingly powerful passed pawn in the centre. Alas, only seemingly: it will be securely blocked by the knight, and in the endgame it will become an appreciable weakness. This method of 'circumventing' a passed d6-pawn in the Grünfeld Defence was one that I used in my Seville match against Karpov (1987), but for the mid-1970s such an interpretation was a revelation, an important step forward in the understanding of chess.

24 d6!?

After 24 ♕b5 there is a very simple way to equalise: 24...♗c5! 25 ♘xe5 ♘xe5 26 ♗xe5 ♗xf2+! 27 ♔xf2 ♖xe5 28 ♖xe5 ♕f4+ 29 ♔g1 ♕xe5.

24...♗f6



25 ♘d2?!

Again Spassky is inferior to his opponent in his evaluation of the position – in matchplay such a thing is dispiriting and takes away your confidence. He overestimates the strength of the d6-pawn and avoids the equal middlegame after 25 ♕b5, where his passed pawn would have restricted Black's forces, for example: 25...e4 26 ♘h2 ♕e6 27 ♗xf6 ♘xf6 28 ♕xb7 ♖d7 29 ♕b4 ♘d5 30 ♕c5 ♖xd6. In the endgame, however, it is transformed into ballast! But in order to show this, great accuracy is required of Black, and Karpov displays this.

25...♕xe2 26 ♖xe2 ♖c8! 27 ♘e4

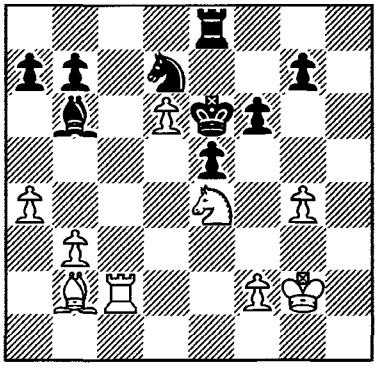
Again a questionable decision: White drives the bishop to d8, where it is ready for play on both flanks. It would have been better to block the c-file by 27 ♘c4! ♗g5 28 a4 and to maintain equality after 28...f6 29 g3 ♔f7 30 ♔g2, since it is hard for Black to strengthen his position.

27...♗d8 28 g4 f6 29 ♔g2 ♔f7 30 ♖c1?!

Karpov attaches an exclamation mark to this move: control of the c-file! But Tal logically objects: 'White should not have exchanged a pair of rooks: although he now occupies the c-file, there are no invasion squares there for the rook. The immediate 30 a4 should have been considered. With all four rooks on the board, it would be dangerous for the black king to approach the d6-pawn on account of the threat of f2-f4.'

30...♗b6 31 ♖ec2 ♖xc2 32 ♖xc2 ♔e6 33 a4

White decides to include his bishop in the defence of the d6-pawn. The advance of the other pawn promised less: 33 b4 a5 34 bxa5 ♗xa5 35 ♔g3 b5, or 33...♔d5 34 ♔f3 g6 35 ♖d2+ ♗d4 36 ♘g3 ♖c8.

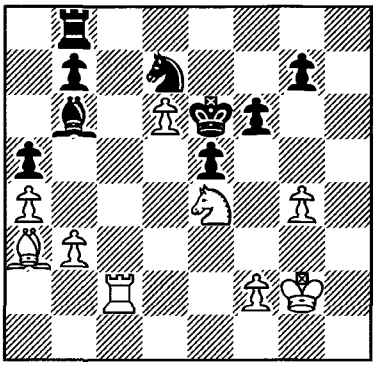


33...a5!

This is by no means prophylaxis, but the start of a deep plan of playing for a win. White has no way of strengthening his position, but the same cannot be said about Black.

34 ♗a3 ♖b8!

It turns out that Karpov is preparing ...b7-b5, which is hard to prevent. Thus if 35 ♘c3?! the rook advantageously turns back – 35...♖c8.



35 ♖c4!

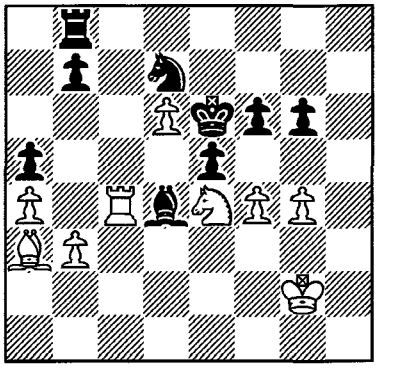
The rook wants to help the knight carry out the manoeuvre e4-c3-b5. There is still no other, more fitting work for it on the c-file.

35...♗d4! 36 f4!

After the direct 36 ♘c3 Black would have gained the advantage by 36...♘b6 37 ♖c7 ♗xc3 38 ♖xc3 ♘d5 39 ♖c5 b6 40 ♖c2 b5.

36...g6

Black has to agree to the exchange of a pair of pawns, since in the event of 36...b5 37 axb5 ♖xb5 White succeeds in carrying out an even more favourable exchanging operation: 38 f5+ ♔d5 39 ♘c3+! ♗xc3 40 ♖xc3, gaining excellent drawing chances.



37 ♘g3?!

After the logical 37 fxe5 ♗xe5 38 ♖c7 it would have been not so easy for Black to demonstrate the reality of his advantage. If 38...b5 there would have followed 39 ♖a7 b4 40 ♗c1 ♖c8 41 ♗e3 ♖c2+ 42 ♔f1! ♖b2 43 ♘c5+ ♘xc5 44 ♗xc5 with good chances of a draw: 44...♖xb3 45 ♔e2! ♖b2 46 ♔d3!, or 44...♗xd6 45 ♖a6 ♖d2 46 ♔e1 ♖d5 47 ♗b6 ♗g3 48 ♗f2 ♖d6 49 ♖xa5.

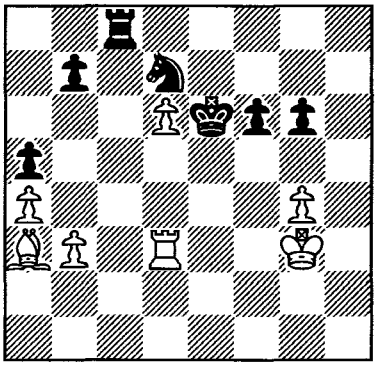
After the more subtle 38...b6! 39 g5! f5 40 ♘d2 the use of the computer as a guiding sparring-partner can lead to an amusing drawing finale: 40...b5 41 ♘f3 b4 42 ♖xd7 bxa3 43 ♖e7+ ♔xd6 44 ♖xe5 a2 45 ♖e1 ♖xb3 46 ♖a1 ♖b2+ 47 ♔g3 ♔c5 48 ♘e5 ♔b4 49 ♘xg6 ♔b3 50 ♘f4 ♖b1 51 ♖xa2 ♔xa2 52 g6 ♔a3 53 g7 ♖b8 54 ♘e6 ♖g8 55 ♔f4 ♔xa4 56 ♔xf5 ♔b4 57 ♔f6 ♔c4 58 ♘f4 a4 59 ♘e2 ♔d3 60 ♘c1+ ♔c2 61 ♘a2 ♔b2 62 ♘b4 a3 63 ♔f7 ♖b8 64 g8♕ ♖xg8 65 ♔xg8 ♔b3 66

♘d3 ♔c3 67 ♘c1 ♔c2 68 ♘a2 ♔b3 69 ♘c1+ ♔b2 70 ♘d3+. However, 40...♗f4! 41 ♘f3 ♗e3 nevertheless leaves Black with chances of success.

37...exf4!

Again Karpov squeezes the maximum out of the situation. After the natural 37...b5 38 f5+ gxf5 39 gxf5+ ♔d5 White would have gained a draw: 40 ♖c7 b4 41 ♗xb4 ♖xb4 42 ♖xd7 ♖xb3 43 ♘h5! e4 44 ♖e7 (Spassky), or 40...bxa4!? 41 bxa4 ♖b3 42 ♖xd7 ♖xa3 43 ♘h5 e4 44 ♖e7 ♖a2+ 45 ♔h3 ♔xd6 46 ♖xe4 ♔d5 47 ♖e6.

38 ♖xd4 fxg3 39 ♔xg3 ♖c8 (control of the c-file has passed to Black, and this immediately makes the defence more difficult) **40 ♖d3**



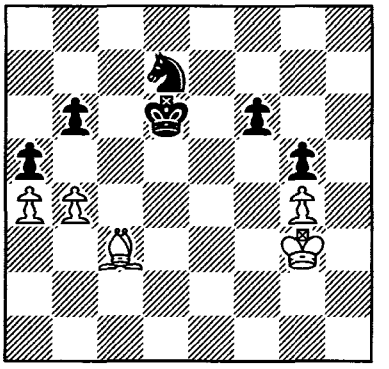
40...g5!

I think that Spassky must have underestimated the strength of this move, the last one before the time control. Black secures a solid post for his knight at e5 and prepares to play ...b7-b5. Although there is very little material left on the board, it is not easy for White to defend.

41 ♗b2 b6 42 ♗d4

In the analysis of the adjourned position 42 ♖c3 provoked arguments among the experts. Karpov's recommendation 42...♖h8 can hardly give Black anything. There only remains the exchange of rooks – 42...♖xc3+ 43 ♗xc3. Now the endgame after 43...♘c5 44 ♔f3 ♘xb3 45 d7 ♔xd7 46 ♗xf6 ♘c5 47 ♗xg5 ♘xa4 48 ♔e4 was rightly judged by Botvinnik to be drawn, since the knight will be unable to help the king with the advance of the pawns, for example: 48...♔c6 49 ♔d4 ♘c5 50 ♗e3 b5 51 g5 ♘e6 52 ♔c3 ♔d5 53 g6.

Botvinnik (like all the later commentators) also considered the ending arising after 43...♔xd6 44 b4 to be drawn.



Analysis diagram

There's no denying that his variation is elegant and convincing: 44...axb4 45 ♗xb4+ ♔d5 46 a5 b5 47 a6 ♔c6 48 ♗a5! ♘c5! 49 ♔f3 ♘xa6 50 ♗c3 b4 51 ♗xf6 b3 52 ♔e2 ♘c5 53 ♔d1 ♘e4 54 ♗d8 ♔d7 55 ♗a5, but the trouble is that it contains a mistake on the very first move! In the diagram position no one noticed the pretty 44...b5!!, enabling Black to create a dangerous passed pawn.

After 45 axb5 the winning method is simple: 45...a4! 46 b6 a3 47 b5 a2 48 ♔f3 ♘e5+ 49 ♔g3 (49 ♔e4 ♘xg4 50 ♔f5 ♘e3+ etc.) 49...♔d7 50 ♗b2 ♔c8 51 ♗a1 ♔b7 52 ♗d4 ♘d3 53 ♗xf6 ♔xb6 54 ♔f3 ♘c5 55 ♗b2 ♔xb5 56 ♔e3 ♔c4 57 ♔d2 ♘b3+ 58 ♔e3 ♔d5.

The win is more difficult when the white pawn is more remote – 45 bxa5 bxa4:

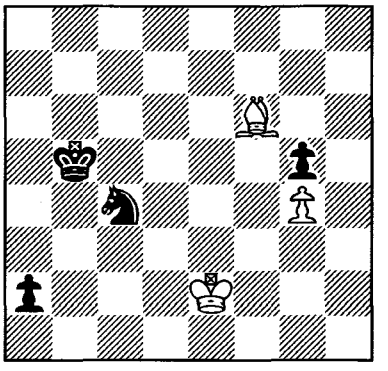
1) if 46 a6 ♔c7 47 ♔f3 Black wins most simply by 47...♘e5+ 48 ♔e4 ♘xg4 49 ♔f5 ♘h6+!, for example: 50 ♔xf6 g4 51 ♗d4 a3 52 ♔g5 a2 53 ♔f4 ♔c6 54 a7 ♔b7 55 ♗a1 ♔xa7 56 ♔g3 ♔b6, or 50 ♔g6 g4 51 ♔xh6

g3 52 ♔h5 g2 53 ♗d4 a3 54 ♔g4 a2;

2) a fascinating race of two black pawns can be observed in the event of 46 ♔f3 ♘e5+! 47 ♔e4 ♘xg4 with the sequel 48 a6 ♔c6 49 ♔f5 ♘h6+! 50 ♔xf6 g4 51 ♔g5 a3! 52 ♗d4 g3 53 ♔f4 g2 54 ♔f3 ♘f5, or the somewhat more complicated 48 ♔f5 ♘e3+ 49 ♔e4 ♘d5 50 ♗b2 ♔e6! 51 a6 f5+ 52 ♔f3 ♘c7 53 a7 ♔d5 54 ♗c1 (54 ♗f6 g4 55 ♔f4 a3 55 ♔xf5 g3 56 ♗e5 a2!) 54...f4! 55 ♗b2 ♘a8! 56 ♗a3 ♔e5 57 ♔g4 ♔e4! 58 ♗c5 f3 59 ♔g3 g4 60 ♔f2 ♔d5 61 ♗e7 ♔c4 62 ♔g3 ♔b3 and wins;

3) the win is the most difficult if White tries by 46 ♗b4+ ♔c6 47 ♔f3 not to allow the black pawn to reach a3. Now chasing after the a5-pawn throws away the win: 47...♔b5? 48 ♗e7! ♔xa5 (or 48...♘e5+ 49 ♔g3 ♘f7 50 ♔f3! ♔xa5 51 ♔e4 ♘h6 52 ♗xf6 a3 53 ♗xg5 ♘xg4 54 ♗c1 a2 55 ♗b2) 49 ♔e4 ♔b5 50 ♔d5 ♘e5 51 ♗xf6 ♘xg4 52 ♗xg5 a3 53 ♗c1 a2 54 ♗b2 ♔b4 55 ♔d4 ♔b3 56 ♗a1 ♔c2 57 ♔c4 ♘f2 58 ♔b4 ♔b1 59 ♗d4 ♘d3+ 60 ♔b3 with a draw.

The problem is solved by an unexpected knight manoeuvre: 47...♘e5+! 48 ♔g3 ♘c4! 49 ♗e7 (49 ♗c3 a3 50 ♗xf6 a2 51 a6 ♔b6 etc. leads to the same positions) 49...a3 50 a6 a2 51 ♗xf6 ♔b6 52 ♔f3 ♔xa6 53 ♔e2 (53 ♔e4 ♔a5 54 ♔f5 ♔a4 55 ♔xg5 ♔b3 56 ♗a1 ♔c2 57 ♔f4 ♔b1 58 g5 ♔xa1 59 g6 ♘e5! 60 g7 ♘g6+ 61 ♔g5 ♘e7 62 ♔f6 ♘g8+ 63 ♔f7 ♔b2 64 ♔xg8 a1♕ and wins) 53...♔b5!



Analysis diagram

54 ♔d1 allows Black an easy win: 54...♘e3+ 55 ♔c1 ♘xg4 56 ♗g7 ♘f2 57 ♔b2 g4 58 ♔xa2 (forced, since, alas, 58 ♗e5 is not possible) 58...g3! 59 ♗e5 g2 60 ♗h2 ♔c4 61 ♔b2 ♔d3! 62 ♔c1 ♔e2 63 ♔c2 ♔f1 64 ♔d2 ♘g4.

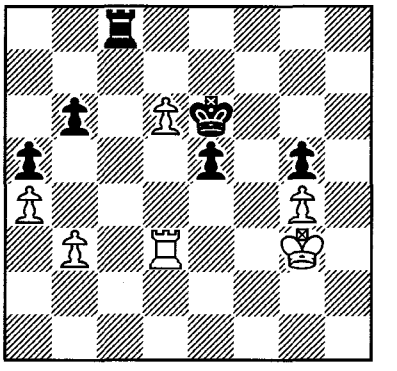
But in the event of 54 ♔d3 he has to find the study-like 54...♘a3!!, preventing the king from approaching the a2-pawn. Then neither 55 ♔d2 ♔c4 56 ♔c1 ♔b3 57 ♗g7 ♘c4 58 ♗f6 ♘e3, nor the desperate 55 ♔e4 ♔c4 56 ♔f5 ♔d3 57 ♔xg5 ♘c4 58 ♔h6 ♔c2 59 ♗a1 ♔b1 saves White from defeat.

42...♖c6 43 ♗c3 ♖c5?

All the commentators thought that the pawn capture 43...♖xd6 44 ♖xd6+ ♔xd6 would have allowed White good drawing chances after 45 b4. It is probable that both players came to the same conclusion in their adjournment analysis. However, 45...b5! leads to the position that was examined earlier. Thus a serious analytical error could have cancelled out the results of Black's previous fine play.

44 ♔g2 ♖c8 45 ♔g3 ♘e5! 46 ♗xe5 fxe5

Evidently judging the bishop vs. knight ending to be drawn, Karpov pins his hopes on the rook ending – and he is not mistaken, as shown by the following mistake, the 'home' origin of which was also quite probable.



47 b4?

An imperceptible error, but it loses the game. In trying to reduce the remaining mate-

rial to the minimum, White presents his opponent with a highly important tempo. As shown by Spassky, White would also have lost after 47 ♔f3 ♖d8 48 b4 (or 48 ♔e4 ♖xd6 49 ♖xd6+ ♔xd6 50 ♔f5 ♔d5 51 ♔xg5 e4 52 ♔f4 ♔d4 53 g5 e3 54 g6 e2 55 g7 e1♕ 56 g8♕ ♕f1+ 57 ♔g4 ♕g1+) 48...axb4! 49 ♖b3 ♖f8+! 50 ♔e3 ♖f4! 51 ♖d3 ♖xg4 52 d7 ♖g3+ etc.

It would appear that only the study-like 47 ♔f2! ♖d8 48 ♖f3! would have saved White. Spassky cuts short his analysis in the position after 48...♖xd6 49 ♖f5 ♖d3 50 ♖xg5 ♖xb3 51 ♖g6+ ♔d5 52 g5 with the evaluation 'with counterplay for the pawn and drawing chances'. In fact, 52...♖b4 53 ♔e3 ♖xa4 54 ♖xb6 ♖e4+ 55 ♔f3 ♖f4+ 56 ♔e3 a4 57 g6 ♖g4 58 ♖a6 leads to a clear draw.

47...e4! 48 ♖d4

There is no longer any way to save the game. It is bad to play either 48 ♖b3 ♔xd6 49 bxa5 bxa5 50 ♔f2 ♔d5 51 ♔e3 ♖c5 52 ♖a3 (52 ♖b7 ♖c3+ 53 ♔e2 ♔e5 54 ♖b5+ ♔f4 55 ♖xa5 ♖c2+) 52...♔e5 53 ♖b3 ♖d5 54 ♖c3 ♖d3+!, or 48 ♖d1 ♖d8 49 bxa5 bxa5 50 ♖e1! ♔e5! 51 ♖f1, which, according to analysis by Spassky, would have given a straightforward technical win after both 51...♖xd6! 52 ♖f5+ ♔d4, and 51...e3! 52 ♖f5+ ♔e4, for example: 53 ♖xg5 ♖xd6 54 ♖g8 ♖d1 55 ♖e8+ ♔d3 56 ♖d8+ ♔c2 57 ♖c8+ ♔d2 58 ♖d8+ ♔e1 59 ♖a8 e2 60 ♖xa5 ♖d3+! 61 ♔f4 ♔f2 62 ♖e5 ♖f3+ 63 ♔g5 ♖e3.

48...♔e5 49 ♖d1 axb4 50 ♖b1 ♖c3+ 51 ♔f2 ♖d3 52 d7 ♖xd7 53 ♖xb4 ♖d6 54 ♔e3 ♖d3+ 55 ♔e2 ♖a3 56 ♖xb6 ♖xa4 0-1

Very subtle play, although not without its faults.

Karpov took the lead: 2-1. There is no doubt that the ex-champion's mistakes in the 5th game and especially the 6th undermined his belief in success and brought the ultimate finish closer.

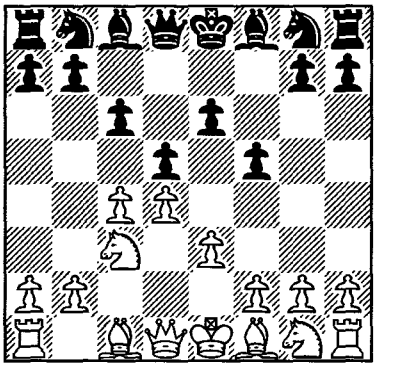
'After missing a draw on the resumption of the 6th game, the distressed Spassky was completely outplayed in the 7th,' writes Roshal. 'Either the closeness of the desired conclusion affected Karpov, or else his youth told: at one point he made an impulsive decision, and in the adjourned position he no longer had a win.'

Game 61

A.Karpov-B.Spassky

Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 7th game
Dutch Defence A85

1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 c6 4 e3 f5



In his search for schemes unfamiliar to his opponent, Spassky placed his choice on the strategically risk 'stonewall' set-up, which had not previously occurred in his games. And again his choice proved unsuccessful. Spassky nullified his advantage in the experience of playing typical middlegame positions, and Karpov was able to handle a standard position in this variation by using general considerations.

5 f4

'Karpov remains faithful to his manner of play – in the first instance to restrict his opponent's possibilities.' (Botvinnik)

5...♘f6 6 ♘f3 ♗e7 7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 ♘e4

Botvinnik considered the knight leap into the centre to be over-hasty and suggested immediately making the bishop manoeuvre ♗c8-d7-e8-h5(g6): 8...♗d7 9 ♘e5 ♗e8. Nearly 20

years later Karpov again played this line, and Black equalised by solving the problem of his bishop's development in another way: 8...b6 9 ♕c2 ♗b7 10 cxd5 cxd5 11 ♗d2 ♘c6 12 a3 ♘e4 13 ♖fc1 ♖c8 14 ♕d1 ♕d7 15 ♗e1 ♖c7 16 ♖c2 ♘xc3 17 ♖xc3 ♖fc8 18 ♖ac1 ♗d6 19 ♕a4 ♘b8 (Karpov-Ivanchuk, Tilburg 1993).

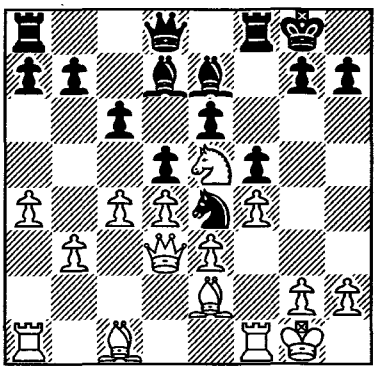
9 ♕c2 ♘d7 10 b3 ♘xc3

Instead of this also premature exchange, which merely restricts Black's possibilities, he should have played 10...♘df6.

11 ♕xc3 ♘f6 12 ♘e5! ♗d7

This seemingly natural move allows White to prepare the advantageous exchange of the dark-squared bishops. The manoeuvre of the bishop via e8 to h5 should have been made after prophylaxis – 12...♗d6 13 a4 ♕e7!

13 a4! ♘e4?! (this move, the fruit of half an hour's thought, was condemned by Botvinnik, who thought that activity in the centre with 13...c5 was preferable) **14 ♕d3!**



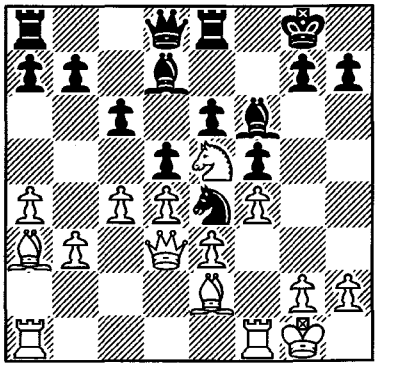
14...♗f6?

Black decides to give up his bishop for the formidable knight, but after this the white bishop becomes complete master of the dark-squared diagonals! The variation 14...♗e8 15 ♗a3 ♗xa3 16 ♖xa3 a5 17 ♗f3 would also have led to an unpromising situation where, apart from his spatial advantage, White would have the possibility of attacking the opponent's central outpost with his bishop, whereas Black would have to reconcile himself to an 'eternal' knight at e5.

Therefore 14...c5 was now necessary, initiating play in the centre and activating the passive bishop at d7. After 15 cxd5 exd5 16 dxc5 ♘xc5 17 ♕xd5+ ♗e6 18 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 19 ♗c4 ♗xc4 20 bxc4 ♖ac8 Black would have compensation for the pawn, while in the event of 16 ♗a3 ♗e6 17 dxc5 ♘xc5 18 ♕d1 ♘e4 19 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 20 ♕d4 ♖fc8 White would retain an obvious positional advantage, but Black's position would be quite tenable.

15 ♗a3 ♖e8

Hopes of creating counterplay were promised by an operation in the centre: 15...dxc4 16 bxc4?! c5 17 ♗f3 ♗xe5 18 fxe5 ♗c6, but 16 ♘xc4! c5 17 ♖ad1 would have immediately extinguished Black's activity.



16 ♗h5! g6

'Now Spassky's light-squared bishop is severely restricted, and after the inevitable opening of the h-file the g6-pawn will become a good target for White to attack.' (Botvinnik). In addition, two more dark squares are weakened – f6 and h6.

17 ♗f3 ♗xe5

'This leads to a lost position.' (Botvinnik). But 17...b5, a suggestion by the master Cherepkov to activate the sleeping bishop, would not have solved Black's problems after the cool-headed 18 ♗xe4! dxe4 19 ♕e2.

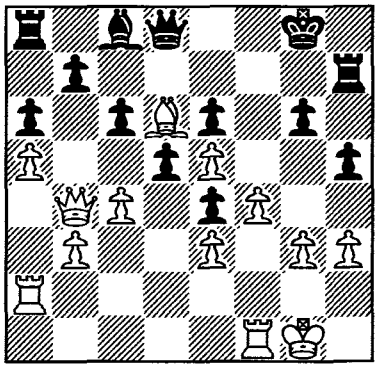
18 dxe5! h5

Forestalling g2-g4, but Karpov emphasises the drawbacks of this advance with a timely exchange.

19 ♗xe4! fxe4 (after 19...dxe4? White would have gained the d-file) **20 ♕d2 ♔f7 21 a5 ♖h8 22 ♗d6! ♖h7 23 ♕b4**

Karpov consistently carries out his containment strategy. Now he deprives the black pieces of their mobility, forcing them to vegetate on the back two ranks.

23...♗c8 24 ♖a2 ♔g8 25 h3 a6 26 g3



White's plan becomes clear: he wants to place his queen's rook at g2, take his king to the queenside, and then destroy the enemy king's defences by g3-g4 and f4-f5.

26...♗d7!

Spassky decides to try and divert the opponent from carrying out his plan, and Karpov – perhaps wrongly – decides to take a pawn which was merely preventing Black from coordinating his pieces.

27 ♕xb7 ♗e8 28 ♕b4 ♖aa7! 29 ♖g2

29 ♕b6! ♕a8 30 ♕d4 ♖ab7 31 b4 was stronger – the black pieces occupy tragic-comic positions, and White is threatening also to destroy the queenside by b4-b5.

29...♖ab7 30 ♕c3 ♖bf7 (switching powerful support to the kingside) **31 ♗c5 g5!**

'The last chance: after all, within a few moves the game will be adjourned, and resistance after adjournment analysis will be a hopeless matter.' (Botvinnik)

32 ♗b6?

'Here, for virtually the only time in the entire match,' writes Botvinnik, 'Spassky's opponent shows that he is only 23 – a young age for events of such intensity. The realisation that his position was won prevented Karpov from calmly evaluating the situation' – and after relaxing he transposed moves in his intended plan. The safest and strongest way was the timely exchange 32 cxd5!, forcing Black to open the c-file: 32...cxd5 (32...exd5? 33 e6!) 33 ♗b6 ♕b8 34 ♖c1 with an extra pawn and an enormous positional advantage.

32...♕d7 33 cxd5 exd5!

The queen, after being driven to d7, has made this capture possible, and White unexpectedly has to think about the safety of his king.

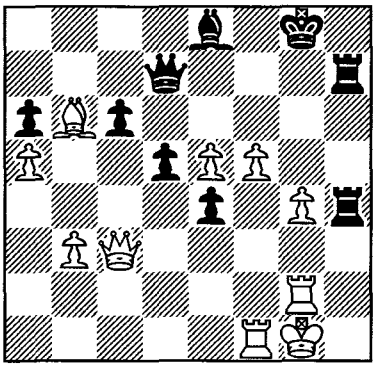
34 g4 hxg4 35 hxg4

Tal suggested that Karpov went in for this position, considering it to be won on account of the unavoidable f4-f5.

35...gxf4!

The opening of the position is Black's only chance. The degree of risk does not play any role – things can't be any worse than they are.

36 exf4 ♖h4 37 f5 ♖fh7



For the first time in the game Black has gained the opportunity to create some threats, and Karpov, realising his error, became nervous and sank into thought for 15 minutes. The decision he came to was by no means the best and probably indicates that he was somewhat rattled.

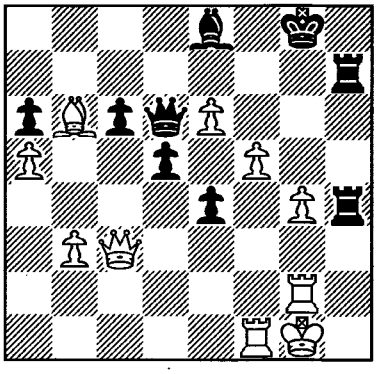
38 e6?

It is hard to condemn a move made in time-trouble. It all seems correct: yes, the

black queen gains the prospect of a raid into White's position, but Karpov has planned a manoeuvre aimed at ensuring the safety of his king. However, the idea proves to have a flaw.

Meanwhile, in the nervy atmosphere that had suddenly arisen on the board, the bold removal of the king from the danger zone – 38 ♔f2! – would have given White good winning chances. After 38...♖h3 an extremely intricate situation results from 39 ♗e3 ♕e7 40 ♔e1 c5! 41 ♕xc5 ♕xe5 42 ♗d4 ♖c7! 43 ♕b6 ♖c1+ 44 ♔d2 ♕c7. There only remains 39 ♖g3 ♖h2+ 40 ♔e3! (this way, into the hail of bullets! The cautious 40 ♔e1? would even lose: 40...c5! 41 ♗xc5 ♕b5 42 ♖f2 ♖h1+ 43 ♔d2 ♖7h2 44 ♔c2 ♕f1! 45 ♕d2 ♕b1+ 46 ♔c3 ♖c1+ 47 ♔b4 ♖c4+ 48 ♔a3 ♕a1+ 49 ♕a2 ♕c1+ 50 ♕b2 ♖a4+!) 40...♖7h3 41 ♔f4!! It is surprising, but this square is the most comfortable shelter for the king. Here it not at all easy to get at – at any event, I was unable to do so in my analysis. And meanwhile the white pawns are ready to begin advancing...

38...♕d6

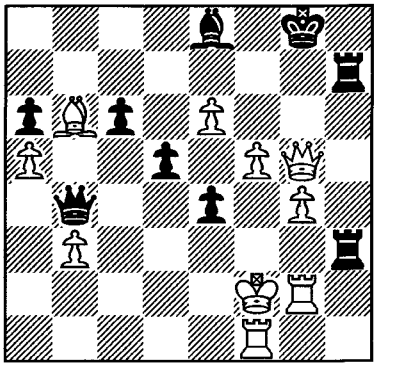


39 ♕g3

The computer optimistically evaluates the position after 39 ♗e3!? ♖h2 40 ♕d2, calculating (I stress the word 'calculating') that White still has winning chances. However, it is not easy for me to confirm this, even after making an analysis, which, incidentally, it is difficult to do in this position, because of the abundance of possibilities for both sides.

39...♖h1+ 40 ♔f2 ♕b4! (unexpectedly it transpires that this manoeuvre saves Black) **41 ♕e3** (the sealed move) **½-½**

The players agreed a draw without resuming the game. Indeed, in this sharp position neither side can afford to take a risk, and analysis shows that a draw is inevitable. The finish to this splendid chess thriller could have been: 41...♖1h3 42 ♖g3 ♖h2+ 43 ♖g2 ♖2h3 44 ♕g5+.



Analysis diagram

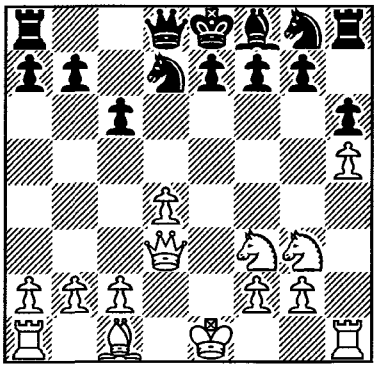
The last test before acknowledging the draw. 44...♖g7? looks very tempting, especially since in the event of the obvious 45 ♕d8? Black even wins with the cunning 45...c5! – it turns out that the white pieces are unable to save their king: 46 ♕xd5 e3+! 47 ♔g1 e2! 48 ♖xe2 ♗c6!! 49 ♕xc6 ♕d4+ 50 ♖ff2 ♕d1+. On the other hand, after 45 ♕c1! it transpires that Black has moved his rook to g7 in vain. The main threat is 46 f6 (for example, 45...d4 46 f6!), and no effective way of parrying it is apparent. In the variation 45...♖c3 46 ♕d2 ♖f3+ 47 ♔g1! (47 ♔e1 ♖c3!) 47...♕xd2 48 ♖xd2 ♖xg4+ 49 ♖g2 White loses a pawn, but the inevitable f5-f6 will cost Black his bishop. But after 44...♔h8! White, not making the same mistake twice (45 ♖d1? c5!, and it is Black who wins!), gives perpetual check – 45 ♕f6+ ♔g8 46 ♕g5+.

This was the prelude to the last turning point in the match: fate granted Spassky a mi-

raculous escape and a chance finally to try and breach the super-solid Caro-Kann Defence. He arrived for the 8th game in a fighting mood, but his young opponent did not lose his customary composure and again showed himself to be a brilliant defender.

Game 62
B.Spassky-A.Karpov
Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 8th game
Caro-Kann Defence B19

1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘c3 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♗f5 5 ♘g3 ♗g6 6 h4! (6 ♘f3 – *Game No.60*) **6...h6 7 h5 ♗h7 8 ♘f3 ♘d7 9 ♗d3 ♗xd3 10 ♕xd3**



10...♘gf6

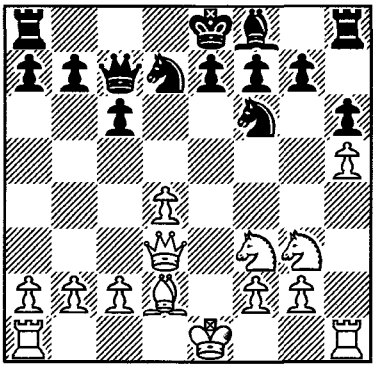
At that time it was customary to play 10...♕c7 (preventing ♗f4) and then ...0-0-0 (since ...0-0 was considered too dangerous), although 10...♘gf6 or 10...e6 was not a rejection of the 'compulsory program': if 11 ♗f4 Black replied 11...♕a5+ 12 ♗d2 (after 12 c3 White has problems with castling: the queen at a5 keeps the a2- and h5-pawns under fire) 12...♕c7, returning to the usual line.

In the 4th game after 10...e6 Spassky employed a fresh idea – 11 b3 ♘gf6 12 ♗b2. Karpov's reaction was forceful – 12...♕a5+! 13 ♗c3 (13 c3 ♗a3) 13...♗b4 14 ♗xb4 ♕xb4+ 15 ♕d2 ♕xd2+ 16 ♔xd2 c5 with equality.

11 ♗d2

On this occasion, evidently not wanting a discussion in what were then the main lines of the Caro-Kann, Spassky had prepared another rare move. As for 11 ♗f4, after 11...♕a5+ at the end of the 1970s the Latvian master Vitolins found the curious plan 12 c3 e6 13 a4!? and 14 b4 (removing the attack on the h5-pawn) followed by 0-0. This did not look too convincing and by the 1980s it was not longer topical. Following the example of Larsen, Black adopted more dynamic set-ups with castling on opposite sides – 11...e6!? 12 0-0-0 ♗e7 and nevertheless ...0-0. In current tournament practice this is the dominant approach.

11...♕c7



12 c4

The usual way is 12 0-0-0 e6 13 ♕e2 and ♘e5 (following the source game: Spassky-Petrosian, 13th matchgame, Moscow 1966) or 13 ♘e4 – this move is considered the strongest even today (*Volume 2, Game No.143*).

By beginning active play before castling, Spassky wants to gain something in this way. But what?

12...e6 13 ♕e2

In Spassky-Portisch (9th matchgame, Mexico 1980) White reverted to the banal 13 0-0-0, when 13...0-0-0 14 ♗c3 c5 15 ♔b1 cxd4 16 ♘xd4 a6 led to a position which, albeit with the pawn on h4, had occurred between the same opponents back in Budapest 1961!

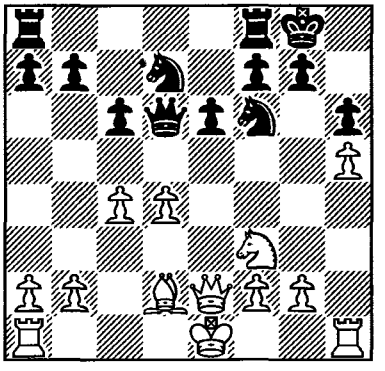
13...♗d6!

After 13...0-0-0 Black may have been afraid of 14 c5 and a white pawn offensive on the queenside. This occurred soon afterwards in the game Karpov-Hort (Ljubljana 1975), but Hort cleverly created counterplay: 14...♖g8! 15 b4 g6 16 ♖b1 gxh5 17 ♔f1 ♖g4 18 ♖b3 ♔b8 19 ♘xh5 ♘xh5 20 ♖xh5 ♘f6 21 ♖e5 ♗g7 22 b5 ♘d5 etc. But Spassky may have been intending 14 ♘e5. Either way, 13...♗d6! is still considered best.

14 ♘f5 ♗f4

The game Karpov-Pomar (Nice Olympiad 1974) went 14...0-0-0?! 15 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 16 ♗a5! ♖de8 17 ♘e5! and Black came under pressure. The fact that Anatoly began playing this variation with White indicates his high evaluation of Spassky's idea! Obviously he was also not satisfied with Black's position in the present game. But about that later.

Here it should be said that the most interesting of the lines along which the variation developed turned out to be 14...0-0! 15 ♘xd6 ♕xd6.

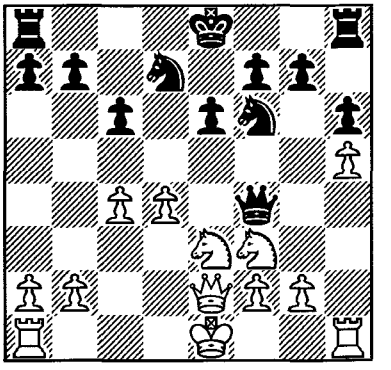


Analysis diagram

Thanks to his kingside (rather than queenside) castling, Black acquires a powerful resource in the fight for the initiative: ...b7-b5! This idea was first tried in 1975 in a game between two Leningrad masters: 16 0-0-0 b5! 17 cxb5 cxb5 18 ♔b1 b4 19 ♘e5 ♘d5, with serious chances for Black on the queenside. I too twice played this with Black (on the advice of my trainer Alexander Shakarov). My opponents avoided queenside castling, but all the same they conceded the initiative: 16 ♖h4 b5! 17 ♔f1 bxc4 18 ♕xc4 ♕d5 19 ♕e2 ♕b5 20 b3 a5 (Lanka-Kasparov, Riga 1977), or 16 ♗c3 b5! 17 cxb5 cxb5 18 ♕xb5 ♘d5 19 ♘e5 ♘xe5 (19...♘7f6!?) 20 dxe5 ♘xc3 21 bxc3 ♕c7 (Kapengut-Kasparov, Daugavpils 1978).

Therefore 16 0-0-0 is nevertheless better, and if 16...b5 – 17 g4! In the game Mnatsakanian-Bagirov (Kirovakan 1978) after 17...bxc4 (though not now topical, 17...♘xg4!? 18 ♖hg1 f5 is also worth analysing) 18 g5 hxg5 19 h6 g6 20 h7+ ♘xh7 21 ♘xg5 ♘xg5 22 ♗xg5 f6? 23 ♕e4 White gained a very strong attack, but 22...c3! would probably have led to a draw: 23 ♕e5!? cxb2+ 24 ♔b1 ♕xe5! 25 dxe5 f6 26 ♖xd7 fxg5 27 ♖hh7.

15 ♗xf4 ♕xf4 16 ♘e3



16...♕c7?!

'It was dangerous to play 16...0-0-0 17 c5 with the threat of ♘c4-d6+. Therefore the correct solution was the undermining move 16...c5!, and if 17 ♘d5 ♘xd5 18 cxd5, then 18...0-0 19 dxe6 ♖fe8.' (Botvinnik). For example: 20 0-0 ♖xe6 21 ♕b5 ♕c7... ½-½ (Tal-Portisch, Bugojno 1978).

The same operation as that planned by Karpov could have been begun immediately: 16...b5!? 17 cxb5 (or 17 d5 cxd5 18 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 19 exd5 0-0 20 dxe6 ♖ae8) 17...cxb5 18 ♕xb5 0-0 with sufficient counterplay.

After the loss of just one tempo, Karpov will not quite be able to equalise for a long time. Even so, the defensive resources in the position prove sufficient for him to withstand a powerful attack.

17 0-0-0 b5

The white king (in contrast to Black's) has moved away from the centre, and the active 17...c5? is now dangerous: 18 ♘d5! ♘xd5 19 cxd5 cxd4+ 20 ♔b1 e5 21 ♘xd4 0-0 22 ♘f5 and wins (Botvinnik).

18 cxb5!

After the tempting 18 c5 there is again a choice between 18...♖d8 19 ♔b1 0-0 20 g4 ♘e4 and 18...0-0-0 19 ♔b1 ♔b7 20 ♘c2 ♘d5 with roughly equal chances.

Spassky is intending a grandiose offensive plan, rightly assuming that the black king has nowhere to hide, apart from the kingside.

18...cxb5+ 19 ♔b1 0-0 20 g4!

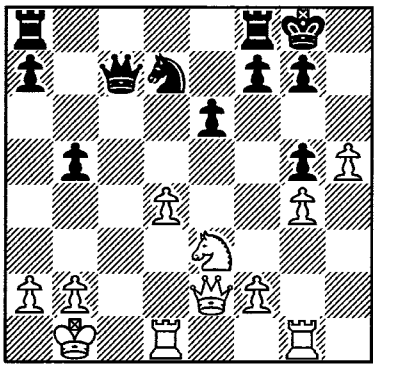
The opening of the g-file is the main link in White's attack. 20 ♕xb5?! ♖ab8 would have signified him rejecting activity and going onto the defensive. After 21 ♕e2 Black has a wide choice of promising continuations: 21...♖b4 22 ♖c1 ♕b7 23 ♖c2 ♖b8 or even the simple 21...♖xb2+ 22 ♕xb2 ♖b8. 21 ♕d3 ♕b7 22 ♖d2 is better, but here too Black has no reason for complaint: 22...♖fc8 23 ♖c2 ♖xc2 24 ♕xc2 ♖c8 25 ♕d3 (25 ♕e2 ♘xh5!) 25...♘e4.

20...♘e4 21 ♖hg1

21 ♖dg1?!, which is usual in such set-ups, would have allowed the opponent to slow the tempo of the attack by 21...♕f4! (22 g5?? is not possible on account of 22...♕xf3!). Kotov recommended the fanciful 21 ♘g2, but this retreat is hardly able to strengthen the attack: 21...♘df6 22 ♘e5 ♖ac8 23 ♖he1 ♖fd8 24 f3 ♘d6.

The immediate opening of lines would not have produced the desired effect – 21 g5 hxg5 (the consequences of 21...♘xg5 22 ♘xg5 hxg5 23 ♖dg1 f6 are also unclear) 22 ♖hg1 f6 23 d5 ♘dc5 24 ♘d4 ♖ae8 25 ♘xb5 ♕f4 with double-edged play.

21...♘g5! (preventing the opening of the g-file; if 21...♕f4?, then 22 g5! ♘xg5 23 ♘xg5 hxg5 24 ♖g4 ♕f6 25 ♕xb5 is strong) **22 ♘xg5 hxg5**



23 d5!

White is again not interested in the b5-pawn – only in an attack! 'Could Spassky have believed that his opponent would be able to defend his broken position?' writes Botvinnik, who considered 23 ♕xb5 to be necessary.

Dvoretsky is of the same opinion: 'White has insufficient resources for a direct attack on the king (partly as a consequence of his knight being not altogether well placed on e3). He can fight for an advantage, only by temporarily conceding the initiative – by accepting the pawn sacrifice, for which his opponent gains definite, but nevertheless insufficient compensation: 23 ♕xb5 ♖ab8 24 ♕d3! (but not Botvinnik's recommendation 24 ♕e2? on account of 24...♖xb2+! 25 ♕xb2 ♖b8) with the idea of ♖d2 and ♖c1.'

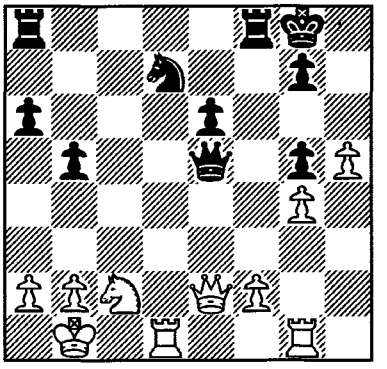
Even so, after 24...♘b6! 25 ♖d2 (25 ♖c1 ♕f4) 25...♖fc8!? Black could have hoped for good counterplay.

23...a6!

Staggering composure! After 23...♕e5 24 dxe6 ♕xe6 White could have grabbed the pawn without risk: 25 ♕xb5 ♘e5 26 ♕d5. To spend time on the defence of a second-rate pawn when you are under fire, even if you have an excellent positional sense you also have to have great courage.

24 h6?!

Consistent, but ineffective! The correct strategy was play in the centre: 24 dxe6 fxe6 25 ♘c2! ♕e5!



Analysis diagram

After the natural 26 ♕d2 the bold 26...♘c5! (26...♘f6?! 27 f3!) 27 ♖ge1 ♕f4 would have enabled Black both to defend the e6-pawn, and activate his pieces.

It turns out that White should have primarily been guided by the opponent's broken pawn structure and threatened to go into a favourable endgame, which would have been achieved by 26 ♖ge1! Black has two alternatives, but in both cases he would have had to solve some difficult problems:

1) 26...♖ad8 27 ♘b4 ♕xe2 28 ♖xe2 ♘f6 29 ♖xd8 ♖xd8 30 ♘a6 (30 f3 ♖d6!) 30...♘xg4 31 ♘c7;

2) 26...♕xe2 27 ♖xe2 ♘c5 28 ♘e1! ♖ad8 29 ♖xd8 ♖xd8, and an unpleasant defence awaits Black both in the knight endgame – 30 ♖e5 ♖d5 31 ♖xd5 exd5 32 ♔c2 ♔f7 33 b4 ♘e6 34 ♘d3 ♔f6 35 ♔d2, and in the rook endgame – 30 ♘f3 ♖d5 31 ♘e5 ♔f8 32 b4 ♘d3 33 ♘xd3 ♖xd3 34 ♖xe6 ♖d4 35 a3 ♖xg4 36 ♖xa6 ♖g1+ 37 ♔c2 ♖f1 38 ♖g6 ♖xf2+ 39 ♔d3.

Spassky's choice, based on intuition and the motto 'Forward, Kazimirych!', is in fact an example of an unequal pawn exchange, which relieves Black of one of his weak pawns and deprives White of his h5-pawn, one which would be very important for the endgame. Alas, this became clear only after no brainstorms were able to demonstrate the strength of his attack. And Spassky had to make his decision with the clock ticking...

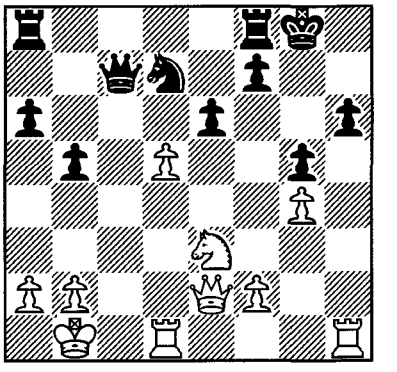
24...gxh6!

Another defensive scheme – 24...g6 25 dxe6 fxe6 was condemned by Tal on the basis of the variation 26 ♘f5!? ♖ae8? 27 h7+! ♔xh7 28 ♖xd7+! ♕xd7 29 ♖h1+ ♔g8 30 ♕e5, but Black would have parried the attack by activating his queen: 26...♕e5! 27 ♕d2 exf5 28 ♖ge1 ♕f6 29 ♕xd7 ♖ad8 30 ♕b7 ♖xd1+ 31 ♖xd1 ♖f7, or 27 ♕c2 exf5 28 ♖xd7 ♖ac8 29 ♕d2 fxg4. Even so, White would have retained an advantage after the less spectacular 26 ♖c1! ♕b7 (or 26...♕f4 27 ♖gd1) 27 ♘f1 ♔h7 28 ♘g3.

Karpov is hoping that, during the time that White spends on winning the h6-pawn, he will be able to consolidate his position.

25 ♖h1

It appears that Black is in trouble.



25...♘f6!

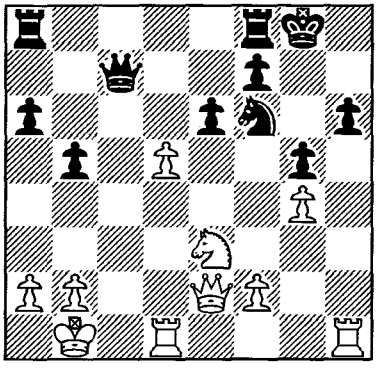
This strong move came as a surprise to Spassky, and he thought for nearly half an hour over his reply, leaving himself just 18 minutes for 14 moves.

25...♔g7? looks the natural reaction, after which there would probably have followed the thunderous 26 f4!! If 26...gxf4 Tal gives the following winning variation: 27 ♕h2 ♖h8 28 ♘g2 e5 29 ♘h4 ♘f6 30 ♘f5+ ♔g6 31 ♖c1 ♕d8 32

♖c6, but if Black does not weaken his position for the sake of keeping his f4-pawn, then after 28...♖ac8! there is no clear way to win.

And yet White's attack is irresistible, but for this he has to play very energetically and accurately! Thus the immediate and 'obvious' 27 g5, in the hope of 27...h5? 28 dxe6 fxe6 29 ♘g4!! with crushing threats (29...♕c6 30 ♖xd7+! ♕xd7 31 ♕e5+ ♔f7 32 g6+ ♔e7 33 ♕g7+ ♔e8 34 ♘f6+ ♖xf6 35 ♕xf6 ♕d5 36 ♕f7+ ♔d8 37 ♖g1) is parried by the only reply 27...♕e5!, when the attack gradually peters out: 28 ♕h5 (28 ♕h2 h5) 28...♕e4+ 29 ♘c2 ♕g6 30 gxh6+ ♔h7 31 ♕e2 ♘f6.

Black is deprived of this saving possibility by the preparatory exchange 27 dxe6! fxe6 (27...fxe3 is refuted by the simple 28 ♕xe3), and now 28 g5! is very strong, for example: 28...fxe3 29 ♕h5 e2 30 ♕xe2, and Black, despite his extra piece, has no defence (30...♘e5 31 ♖xh6 ♖ad8 32 ♖dh1 ♖h8 33 ♕h2 ♕b8 34 ♖h7+ ♖xh7 35 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 36 ♖f1+ ♔e8 37 g6), or 28...♘e5 29 ♕h5! ♘f7 30 ♘g4 ♖ad8 31 gxh6+ ♔h8 32 ♕g6 ♘e5 33 ♕g7+ ♕xg7 34 hxg7+ ♔xg7 35 ♘xe5 with a decisive advantage.



26 ♖xh6

26 d6!? was tempting, but too risky in time-trouble. Besides, the memories of White's sufferings in the 6th game on account of such a pawn were evidently still too fresh. The best line is 26...♕c6 27 f3 ♔g7 28 ♕h2 ♖h8 with *dynamic equilibrium: 29 ♖d3! (29 ♕e5?* ♕xf3!) 29...♖ac8 30 ♖c3 ♕a8 31 ♖c7 b4 32 ♕e2 a5 33 ♖hc1 ♖xc7 34 dxc7 ♖c8 35 ♕d3 ♕b7 36 ♕d8 ♘e8 37 ♕d4+ ♔g8 38 ♕d8 ♔f8, and here the elegant trick 39 ♘d5! leads after 39...♔g7 40 ♘e7 ♖xc7 41 ♖xc7 ♘xc7 42 ♕d4+ ♔f8 43 ♘c8! to the creation of a no less elegant drawing construction.

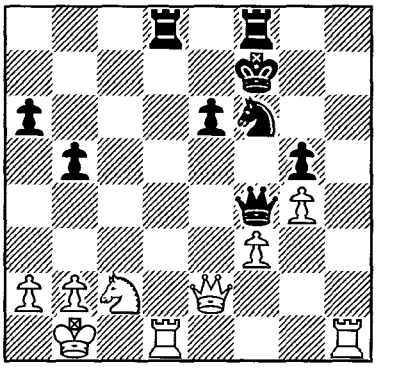
26...♔g7 27 ♖hh1 ♖ad8 28 dxe6 fxe6 (or 28...♖xd1 29 ♘xd1 ♕c6! 30 ♖e1 ♕xe6 31 ♘e3 ♖e8 with equality) **29 ♘c2**

Another attempt to gain an advantage was 29 ♖c1 ♕f4 30 f3, and after 30...♖d7 31 ♖c6 Black is in serious difficulties: 31...♖fd8 32 ♖xe6 ♖d2 33 ♘f5+ ♔g8 34 ♖e7. However, the more active 30...♖h8! would have maintained equality: 31 ♖xh8 ♖xh8 32 ♘c2 ♔f7 33 ♖e1 ♖e8 34 a3, or 31 ♖he1 ♖d7 32 ♖c6 ♖h2.

29...♕f4 (29...♕c4! was simpler, with equality) **30 f3**

The double-edged 30 ♕xe6!? is not so harmless. In the event of 30...♖xd1+ 31 ♖xd1 ♕xg4 32 ♕d6! White has the initiative, so Black would have to play more boldly: 30...♕e4! 31 ♕b3 ♖xd1+ (after 31...♖h8 32 f3 ♖xh1 33 ♖xh1 ♕d3 34 ♕xd3 ♖xd3 35 ♖f1 ♘d5 36 ♔c1 ♔f6 Black's activity in the endgame a pawn down might prove insufficient: 37 ♘e1 ♖d4 38 ♖f2 ♔e5 39 ♖d2 etc.) 32 ♖xd1 ♘xg4! 33 ♖d7+ (33 ♖e1 ♕c4) 33...♔g6 34 ♖d6+ ♖f6 35 ♕g8+ ♔h5!, and White has no more attacking resources.

30...♔f7



31 a3

The last chance was the cunning 31 ♘e1!? ♖xd1+ 32 ♕xd1. Tal thought that after 32...e5 the pawn would have been exchanged, and with it Black's main problem would have disappeared. But if this variation is continued – 33 ♘d3 ♕d4 34 ♕c2! ♖e8 (34...e4 35 fxe4 ♕xe4 36 ♖e1!) 35 ♘c5 e4 36 fxe4 ♘xe4 37 ♕b3 ♔g6 38 ♕h3, White's initiative proves dangerous. An excellent defensive construction was pointed out by Spassky: 32...♔e7! 33 ♘d3 ♕d4 34 ♕d2 (34 ♕c2 ♘d5!) 34...♖d8 35 ♖d1 ♖d5!, and Black, after consolidating in the centre, stands no worse.

31...e5 32 ♘b4 e4! 33 fxe4 ♖xd1+ 34 ♖xd1 ♖e8! (now the conflict is fully exhausted) **35 ♘xa6 ♕xe4+ 36 ♕xe4 ♖xe4 37 ♘c7 b4 38 axb4 ♖xb4 39 ♖f1 ♖f4 ½-½**

A genuine battle of titans!

This draw completely broke the ex-champion. Tal: 'The match was effectively concluded in the 8th game, when Spassky was unable to win it. Personally I didn't doubt for a second that after White began his attack with 24 h6 the game would soon come to a spectacular end. But after 25...♘f6 (Karpov made this move fairly quickly) no win could be found! Such a blow is even greater than a defeat. When such positions cannot be won, you begin to lose confidence. All sorts of devilish thoughts creep into your mind, such as: is it altogether possible to win against him?'

In the 9th game a 'reverse surprise' waited the already pretty exhausted Spassky – an unexpected return to 1 e4! And here his indifferent pre-match preparation again made itself felt: in the Sicilian Defence the ex-world champion did not have to his name even one secure and well-studied variation, corresponding to his active style of play.

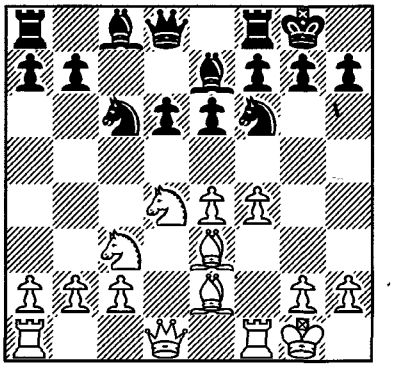
Karpov: 'When I played 1 e4, with a completely vacant look Spassky suddenly began adjusting with both hands, for the second time, his already accurately placed pieces. He was nervous... It is probable that this blow too came as a surprise. The point is that, in contrast to Fischer, who changed openings after comparative failures, I, on the contrary, avoided set-ups which had brought success. Thus in the 11th game I played 1 d4. It was probably rather difficult for Spassky to prepare for games with me.'

Game 63

A.Karpov-B.Spassky

Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 9th game
Sicilian Defence B83

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗e2 ♗e7 7 0-0 0-0 8 f4 ♘c6 9 ♗e3



9...♗d7

Apparently Spassky was somewhat flustered and just in case he decided to avoid 9...e5 10 ♘b3 a5 11 a4 ♘b4 (1st game). He did not want to test the quality of the Karpov team's work. However, in the end it all reduced to the set-ups with ...e6-e5, but in a less favourable version for Black...

10 ♘b3 a5?!

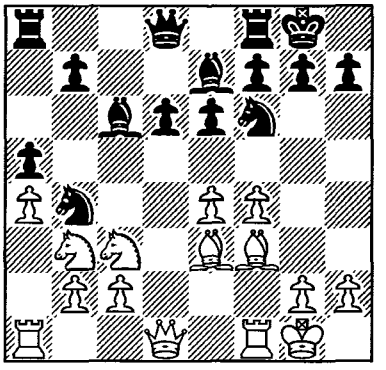
A strategically dubious move. Spassky is still aiming for the set-up which he had analysed together with Bondarevsky. However, this was hardly a detailed analysis by the followers of the 'clear head' theory, as shown by the subsequent course of the game. The usual

10...a6 or 10...♕c7 would have directed the game along the lines of the classical Scheveningen.

11 a4 ♘b4 12 ♗f3 ♗c6

If 12...e5 the strongest has been considered to be 13 ♔h1, since the time of Geller's games: 13...♖c8 14 ♖f2 ♖c4 15 fxe5 dxe5 16 ♖d2 ♕c7 17 ♕g1! with advantage (Geller-Reshevsky, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970), or 13...♗c6 14 fxe5 dxe5 15 ♕e2 ♕c7 16 ♕f2 ♘d7 17 ♖ad1 ♔h8 (Geller-Polugayevsky, Portoroz 1973) 18 ♖d2 ♖ad8 19 ♕g3.

Spassky is not in a hurry to free himself, but the opponent observes his preparations, realising that ...e6-e5 is Black's only chance.



13 ♘d4!

In contrast to the 1st game, the knight gains the opportunity to return to the centre, after which Black has no compensation for the opponent's eternal outpost for his pieces at b5. Besides, after ...e6-e5 the knight may leap to f5, and Spassky goes in for a weakening of his pawn structure.

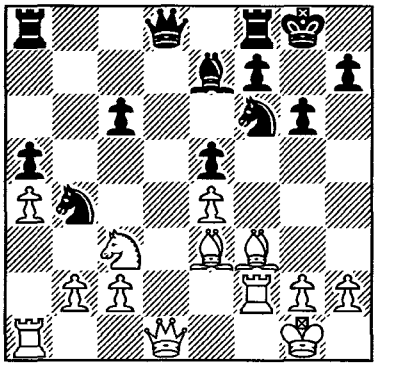
13...g6

Preparing ...e6-e5. The passive set-up 13...♕b8 14 ♕e2 ♖e8 15 ♖ad1 ♔h8 (Klovans-Vasyukov, Riga 1968) does not satisfy Spassky.

14 ♖f2! e5 (the threat of ♖d2 did not allow time for a more thorough preparation of this advance) **15 ♘xc6 bxc6**

After 15...♘xc6?! 16 f5! Black would have been in a difficult position without any strategic trumps.

16 fxe5 dxe5

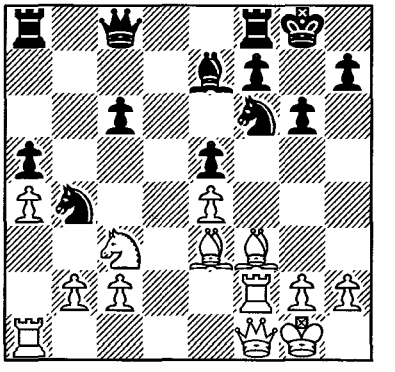


17 ♕f1!

The resulting middlegame looks very attractive for White, but there is not yet anything to herald an instant rout.

17...♕c8?!

This merely provokes a useful pawn move for White and induces the activation of his bishop at f3. Botvinnik suggested 17...♘d7! 18 ♕c4 ♘b6 19 ♕b3 ♗g5 20 ♗c5 (20 ♘d1 ♖b8) 20...♗e7, setting up a defence, or 18 ♖d1!? ♕c7, and Black's position is more solid than in the game.



18 h3! ♘d7

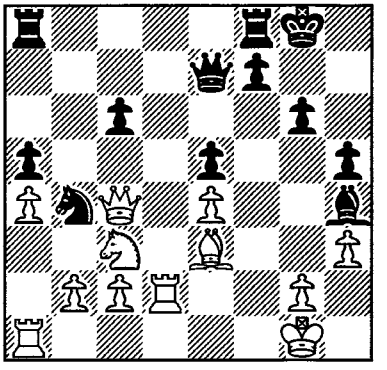
Spassky had probably been planning 18...♕e6, but then noticed in time that after 19 ♖c1! White carries out an extremely unpleasant regrouping: 19...♖a(f)d8 20 ♗e2 ♖d4

21 b3! and 22 ♗c4 (Karpov, Botvinnik).

19 ♗g4 h5?

A serious weakening of the king's shelter. In the opinion of Karpov and Botvinnik, the best chances of a defence were offered by 19...♕c7, in order after 20 ♖d1 ♖ad8 21 ♔h1 ♔g7 22 ♘b1 f5! 23 exf5 ♘d5 to provoke complications. But here too after 20 ♗xd7! ♕xd7 21 ♕c4 White's advantage is obvious.

20 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 21 ♕c4 ♗h4 22 ♖d2 ♕e7



23 ♖f1

Karpov and Botvinnik considered this to be the strongest, and rejected the other development of the attack 23 ♗c5 ♕g5 24 ♖d7 because of the exchange sacrifice 24...♘xc2 25 ♗xf8 ♖xf8. Indeed, after 26 ♖b1 ♗g3! (26...♕xg2+ 27 ♔xg2 ♘e3+ 28 ♔f3 ♘xc4 29 b3 leads to an inferior endgame) Black has excellent compensation: 27 ♕xc6 runs into 27...♘e1! with the threat of ...♗h2+.

However, 24 ♖ad1! (instead of 24 ♖d7) 24...♖fd8 25 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 26 ♖f1! was much stronger, and after 26...♖d7 27 ♗xb4 axb4 28 ♕xc6! ♕e3+ 29 ♔h2 it would have left Black in a hopeless position: 29...♗g3+ 30 ♔h1 ♖a7 31 ♘d5 ♕e2 32 ♕b5!, or 29...♖d8 30 ♘d5 ♕e2 31 ♖f3.

Karpov, most probably intuitively, chose a plan of further strengthening the position, more in accordance with his style of play.

23...♖fd8 24 ♘b1!

This fine 'backwards move' provoked a real stir in the press centre and in the auditorium. The knight is transferred to a better square at the most convenient moment.

24...♕b7

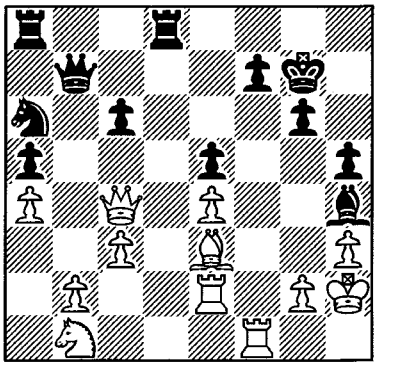
The exchange of queens would have irreparably weakened Black's pawns and led to a technically lost endgame: 24...♕e6 25 ♕xe6 fxe6 26 ♘a3.

25 ♔h2! ♔g7 26 c3 (White also has an enormous advantage after 26 ♖xd8!? ♖xd8 27 ♘d2) **26...♘a6**

Black has to withdraw to the edge of the board. The dashing cavalry raid 26...♖xd2, 27 ♘xd2 ♘c2 28 ♗c5 ♘e1 fails to save him: 29 ♖xe1 ♗xe1 30 ♘f3 ♕xb2 31 ♘xe1 ♕d2 32 ♘f3 ♕f4+ 33 ♔h1 ♖d8 34 ♗g1 or, more methodically, 29 ♘b3 ♘d3 30 ♕xd3 ♕xb3 31 ♕d6 ♕e6 32 ♕xe6 fxe6 33 ♖d1 ♖d8 34 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 35 b4 with a won endgame.

27 ♖e2!

'Following the old Steinitz principle – don't exchange pieces when you have the freer position. Now 28 g3 and ♖ef2 is threatened.' (Botvinnik). The temporary conceding of the d-file is not dangerous – it is more important for White to retain the rook for his attack on the f-file and at the same time vacate the d2-square for his knight.



27...♖f8?

Black should not have shown such indifference to the d-file. 27...♖d6 28 ♘d2 ♖e8 was more tenacious, erecting defensive lines in the event of 29 ♕a2 ♗d8 30 ♘c4 ♖d7 31 ♖ef2 f6. Now the direct assault 32 ♗g5 ♘c5 33

♗xf6+ ♗xf6 34 ♖xf6 wins material, but gives Black counterplay – 34...♘xe4 35 ♘xa5 ♕c7 36 ♖e6 ♖de7 37 ♖xe7+ ♖xe7 38 b4 c5, but on the other hand 32 b3! leaves him under unbearable positional pressure. It is possible that 29 ♘f3 ♗d8 30 b4 axb4 31 cxb4 f6 32 ♖d2! ♖xd2 33 ♗xd2 ♗e7 34 ♘g5! ♗xb4 35 ♗xb4 fxg5 36 ♗d6 is even stronger, emphasising the pitiful fate of the black knight.

27...♖d7 28 ♘d2 ♘c7 is also insufficient – a combined offensive brings White a decisive advantage: 29 ♘f3 ♗f6 30 ♗g5 ♗xg5 31 ♘xg5 f6 32 ♖ef2 ♖f8 33 ♕c5! h4 (33...♕a8 34 h4!, and Black is in zugzwang: 34...♕a6 35 ♖xf6! ♖xf6 36 ♖xf6 ♔xf6 37 ♕f8+) 34 ♘h7! (after 34 ♕xa5 ♖a8 35 ♕c5 fxg5 36 ♕xe5+ ♔g8 37 ♕xg5 ♖g7 38 ♕xh4 c5! Black still has some hopes) 34...♘e6 35 ♕c4 ♔xh7 36 ♕xe6 ♖e7 37 ♕d6 ♕c7 38 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 39 ♖xf6 with a won ending.

28 ♘d2 ♗d8

Altogether submissive. Certain efforts would have been demanded of White after both 28...♗e7 29 ♘b3! ♕c7 30 ♖ef2 f6 31 ♖d2, and if 31...♖fd8 32 ♖xd8 ♗xd8, then 33 ♘xa5! ♕xa5 34 ♕xc6 ♖b8 35 ♖d1! ♗e7 36 ♖d7 ♖e8 37 ♖a7, and 28...♖ae8 29 ♘b3 ♗d8 30 ♖ef2 f6 31 ♖d2 f5 32 ♖fd1 ♘b8 33 ♘c5 ♕f7 34 ♕xf7 ♔xf7 35 ♘b7 ♗c7 36 ♗c5, winning.

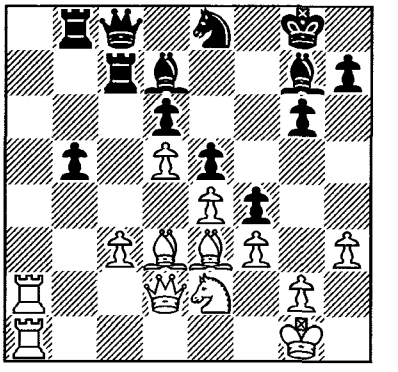
29 ♘f3 f6 30 ♖d2! ♗e7 31 ♕e6! (the decisive invasion) **31...♖ad8** (if 31...♘b8 the simplest is 32 ♖fd1 followed by the unavoidable ♖d7!) **32 ♖xd8 ♗xd8 33 ♖d1 ♘b8 34 ♗c5 ♖h8 35 ♖xd8! 1-0**

An elegant conclusion: 35...♖xd8 36 ♗e7!

Tal: 'The ending of the 9th game creates a completely indelible impression. In general it is rather hard to surprise me, but Tolya did this, by spending no more than about five minutes on the dozen splendid concluding moves.' The score became 3-1 and Karpov needed just one more win.

In the 10th game Spassky was ready to again try and storm the bastions of the Caro-Kann, but for the first time in the match Karpov replied 1...e5, unafraid of playing the Breyer Variation in the Ruy Lopez – his opponent's favourite defence. This was a challenge! White soon closed the position with d4-d5 and gained an enduring initiative. Botvinnik: 'A rare instance, when Karpov was forced to fight against his own domination method.'

Game 64
B.Spassky-A.Karpov
Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 10th game



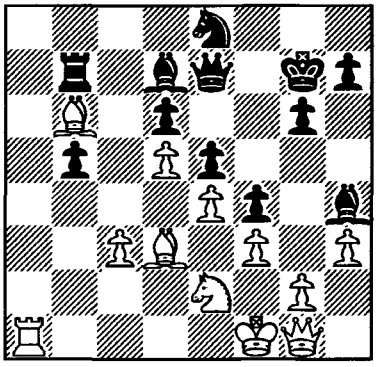
32 ♗a7! (this procedure was later employed by Karpov himself – cf. *Game No.66*) **32...♖bb7?!** (32...♖a8 looks sounder, and if 33 ♗f2(b6), then 33...♖xa2 34 ♕xa2 ♖b7 and ...♗f6!) **33 ♕e1 ♕d8 34 ♕f2 ♖c8?!**

The immediate 34...♗f6 was more accurate.

35 ♖a6 ♗f6 36 ♗b6 ♕e7 37 ♖a7 ♖cb8

'Avoiding a well-camouflaged trap: after 37...♗h4? 38 ♖xb7! ♗xf2+ 39 ♔xf2 ♕h4+ 40 ♔g1 Black's position is hardly tenable.' (Botvinnik). However, here 40...♗xh3 or 40...♘f6 (this move also follows after 40 ♔f1) is unclear. Therefore 39 ♗xf2! ♖c7 40 ♖b8 ♖c8 (40...♕g5 41 ♔h2) 41 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 42 ♗xb5 is much stronger, when Black does indeed have a difficult position: 42...♘f6 43 ♖a7, or 42...♘c7 43 c4! etc.

38 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 39 ♔f1 (39 ♔h1!? ♗h4 40 ♕g1 was also not bad) **39...♗h4 40 ♕g1 ♔g7**



41 ♖a7?

After 41 ♖a8! Karpov would still have faced a difficult struggle for a draw: 41...♘c7?! 42 ♗xc7 ♖xc7 43 ♕b6 ♖c5 44 ♖a7, or 41...♕g5 42 ♗a5 ♕h5 43 ♘c1 ♗xh3 44 ♔e2! ♕g5! (44...♗d7 45 ♖a7) 45 ♖xe8 ♗xg2 46 ♔d2! ♗xf3 47 ♕xg5 ♗xg5 48 ♗b4 etc.

Spassky told me it was at this moment, before the adjournment of the game, that he suddenly felt that he no longer had the strength to fight for a win, that he was mentally exhausted. And, having lost belief in success, he gave up the struggle...

41...♖xa7 42 ♗xa7 ♕d8 43 ♕b6 ♕c7! 44 ♕xc7 ♘xc7 with a draw on the 61st move.

Tal: 'I will simply not undertake to annotate the final, 11th game. It is an exact copy of the 21st game of Spassky's match with Fischer in Reykjavik. There Boris conducted all the concluding games with a kind of anguished pressure. He tried very, very hard... But it didn't happen! No, he didn't give up the match as a bad job – this happened of its own accord. It occurred sub-consciously: he is one of the those players who consciously does not resign...

'Spassky's condition is familiar to me: it was the same with me in the 21st game of my return match with Botvinnik. When I sat down at the board, I thought that, God willing, I would win... It didn't happen! And with Spassky it didn't happen, either against Fischer, or against Karpov.'

Game 65
A.Karpov-B.Spassky
Candidates Match,
Leningrad 1974, 11th game
Queen's Gambit D58

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5

A psychological duel which is typical of matchplay: White has not acceded to his the opponent's desire to play the Nimzo-Indian Defence, and in reply Black did not want to switch to Queen's Indian lines.

4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗h4 0-0 7 e3 (7 ♖c1 – *Game Nos.74 and 84*) **7...b6** (it was not hard to expect this popular variation from Spassky, which bears the name of his second, Bondarevsky) **8 ♗e2**

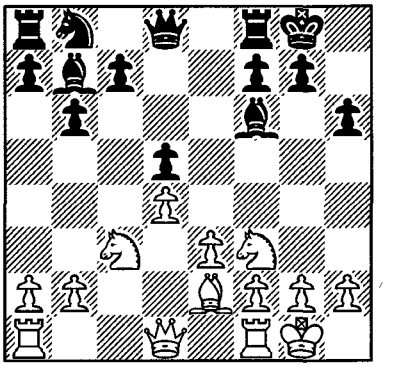
Korchnoi's move, though he also employed 8 ♖c1 (*Game No.28*). Here Fischer played 8 cxd5 (*Volume 4, Game No.103*).

8...♗b7 9 ♗xf6!?

An important part of a plan aimed at restricting the mobility of the enemy pieces, in particular the bishops, and leaving Black few chances of counterplay.

9...♗xf6 10 cxd5! exd5 11 0-0

I would have preferred 11 b4, which after 11...c5 12 bxc5 bxc5 13 ♖b1 ♗c6 14 0-0 ♘d7 or 11...c6 12 0-0 ♘d7 usually transposes into the variation 11 0-0 ♘d7 12 b4.



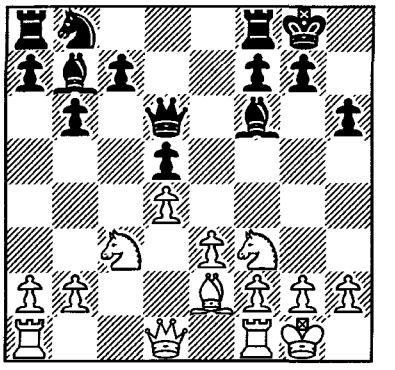
11...♕d6?!

The first questionable moment. Numerous games played since then have shown several other plans, involving ...c7-c5, to be more promising:

1) 11...♕e7 12 ♕b3! ♖d8 13 ♖ad1. This demands a certain accuracy in defence. 13...c6?! is passive: 14 ♖fe1 ♗c8 (14...♘d7 15 ♗f1 ♘f8 16 e4 dxe4 17 ♘xe4 ♘e6 18 ♗c4 ♖e8 19 ♘e5 ♖ad8 20 f4 also favours White, Beliavsky-Georgadze, 47th USSR Championship, Minsk 1979) 15 ♕c2! c5?! 16 e4! dxe4 17 ♘xe4! and Black is in a difficult position (Karpov-Beliavsky, Reggio Emilia 1991). 13...c5! is more energetic (this move has proved better than its initial reputation): 14 dxc5 ♗xc3 15 ♕xc3 (after 15 c6 ♘xc6 16 ♕xc3 ♖ac8 Black has good development in return for his isolated pawn) 15...bxc5 (Black also need not be too concerned about hanging pawns) 16 ♖c1 ♘d7 17 ♖c2 ♖dc8 (not 17...♖ab8?! 18 b3 ♕e6 19 ♖d1 ♕b6 20 ♘e1 Korchnoi-Geller, 5th matchgame, Moscow 1971) 18 ♕a3 a5 19 ♖fc1 ♕f6 20 ♗b5 ♗c6 21 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 22 ♕d3 ♖d6 with equality (Veingold-Tal, Tallinn 1983). Later Timman twice – against Yusupov (Rotterdam 1989) and Ivanchuk (Hilversum 1991) – tried to work on Black's hanging pawns with 16 ♖d2 ♘d7 17 ♖c1 a5 18 ♕a3, but he was unable to demonstrate an advantage for White;

2) 11...♘d7. This is also a good continuation for Black. In Volume 3 (p.326) we have already talked about 12 ♕b3 c6 (Timman-Spassky, Bugojno 1982; Hilversum 1983). Another critical position – 12 b4 c5 13 bxc5 bxc5 14 ♖b1 ♗c6 – occurred seven times(!) in my matches with Karpov (1984-87) alone, and in Volume 7 we will return to it;

3) 11...c5 (with the two bishops, this immediate activity is also possible) 12 dxc5, and here there are two ways: 12...♗xc3 13 bxc3 bxc5 14 ♖b1 ♕c7 (14...♕e7?! is weaker, Kasparov-Torre, Moscow 1981; after 15 ♕a4! ♘c6 16 ♕a3 Black would have been in difficulties) 15 ♘e5, and White maintains pressure (Kramnik-Khalifman, Linares 2000), or 12...bxc5!? (this attempt to rehabilitate 11...c5 may prove successful) 13 ♕b3 ♗c6 14 ♖ad1 ♘d7!? 15 ♘xd5 ♖b8 etc.



12 ♖c1! a6

Black is forced to waste time on this now non-essential move, in order to defend the b5-square. He stands worse after 12...c6 13 e4! and the belated 12...c5? is completely bad: 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♘e4!

13 a3 ♘d7

Botvinnik remarked that 'a position has been reached, similar to a well-known variation of the Grünfeld Defence': 2...g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♗g5 ♘e4 6 cxd5 ♘xg5 7 ♘xg5 e6 8 ♘f3 exd5 9 e3 0-0 10 ♗e2 c6 11 0-0 ♕e7 12 a3 ♗e6 13 ♖c1 ♘d7 and then 14 ♘e1 ♘b6 15 ♘d3 ♖ad8 16 ♘c5 ♗c8 17 b4 ♘c4 18 ♘b1 b6 (18...♘d6!?) 19 ♘b3 ♗a6 20 ♖e1 ♖fe8 21 ♘1d2! b5 22 ♖a1 ♗c8 23 ♗f1 ♕d6 24 ♘c5 (Lasker-Botvinnik, Nottingham 1936).

In my view, the similarity is rather arbitrary for the moment: White's pieces and pawns are arranged exactly like Lasker's, but Black has already weakened his queenside pawn structure. Although subsequently, in typical middlegame positions, this similarity may manifest itself.

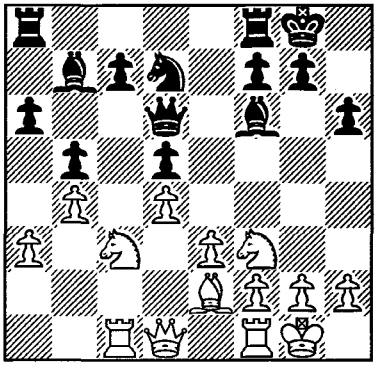
14 b4

White begins playing for a queenside bind, and Black is obliged to forget about activity with ...c7-c5. But he can try to exploit the

weakening of the c4-square.

14...b5

Botvinnik approves of this committing continuation (he himself played this against Lasker). Tal, by contrast, considers this 'nervy decision' to be the initial cause of Black's difficulties and he suggests 14...♗e7 15 ♗d3 ♕e6! 16 ♕c2 ♗d6 and then 17 ♗f5 ♕e7 18 e4 dxe4 19 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 20 ♘xe4 ♗f4 21 ♖cd1 ♘f6 with approximate equality.



15 ♘e1?!

'It is surprising that Karpov also manoeuvres like Lasker. However, in Karpov's opinion, 15 ♘d2 and ♘b3 was stronger, preventing ...a6-a5. In this case Black's position would have been more passive.' (Botvinnik)

15...c6!

Tal suggests not blocking the bishop – 15...♘b6 16 ♘d3 ♘c4 17 ♘c5 ♗c6, but the reinforcement of the b5-pawn also has its point.

16 ♘d3 ♘b6?!

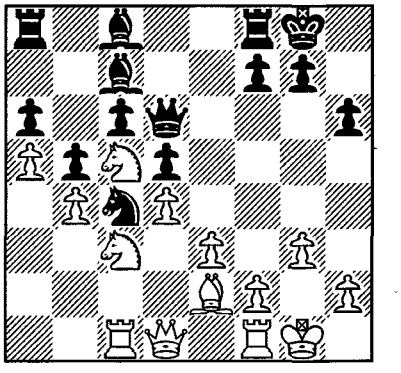
Only the immediate 16...a5! would have enabled Black to exploit White's inaccuracy (15 ♘e1?!) in the implementation of his strategically correct plan. The black rook would have been freed from the need to defend the pawn, and after ...a5-a4 and ...♘d7-b6-c4 the a3-pawn could now have become a weakness.

17 a4! (an excellent reply, forcing Black to think constantly about the defence of his a6-pawn) **17...♗d8?!**

This move, which Tal considered to be the only possibility of obtaining at least some counterplay, was rightly condemned by Botvinnik and Karpov. The former suggested instead 17...♘c4 18 ♘c5 ♖ab8 (when there can follow 19 ♗d3 ♗d8 20 a5 ♗c7 21 g3 ♕e7 22 ♕c2 ♗d6 23 ♘e2 ♖be8), and the latter – 17...♖ad8 18 ♘c5 ♗c8 ('with his rook at d8 and bishop at f6, Black would not have to fear too much the breakthrough in the centre'). But best was probably 17...♖ae8 18 ♘c5 ♗c8 19 ♖a1 (19 ♗g4 ♕c7) 19...♘d7. Everywhere White is 'slightly better', but for the moment he has nothing real.

With the ineffective regrouping made by Spassky, a gradual reduction in Black's defensive resources begins, although, as often happened in the analysis of games that were of exceptional important for the course of chess history, the evaluation of subsequent events was influenced by the final result.

18 ♘c5 ♗c8 19 a5! ♗c7 20 g3 ♘c4



Black has carried out his intention, but the road to equality had not become any easier, especially after the timely opening of the centre by the opponent. As for Black's pride – his knight at c4, it is worth remembering Botvinnik's comments on the aforementioned game with Lasker: 'I realised that the Doctor had deceived me. The knight is beautifully placed at c4, but what next?' To activate his bishops, Black had to advance his f- and g-pawns, seriously weakening the defences of his own king. However, Lasker was unable to choose a con-

venient moment for the opening of the centre, and the game ended in a draw.

21 e4! ♗h3

'This is possibly the decisive mistake.' (Tal). This evaluation should more probably have been applied to 17...♗d8, which began a manoeuvre, the aim of which was in fact to secure the h3-square for the other bishop. Tal recommends 21...dxe4 22 ♘3xe4 ♕g6. Then 23 ♗xc4 bxc4 24 ♖xc4 ♗h3 25 ♖e1 ♖fe8 would certainly have allowed Black to activate his game, but the cool-headed 23 ♖e1! ♔h8 (23...♗h3 is just as hopeless as in the game) 24 ♘d2! would have retained White's advantage.

22 ♖e1!

Another promising plan for strengthening the position was 22 e5 ♕e7 23 ♖e1, but Karpov is consistent in his intention to open the centre while Black's forces are poorly coordinated.

22...dxe4

It is not possible for Black to maintain his centre. Botvinnik thought that 22...♖fe8 was more tenacious, but then White could have switched to playing for a bind – 23 e5 ♕g6 24 ♗d3 ♗f5 25 ♘e2 ♗xd3 26 ♘f4, or continued his pressure in the centre – 23 ♗f3.

23 ♘3xe4 ♕g6

The choice for an army, that has lost its coordination, is limited. The 'more cautious' (according to Botvinnik) 23...♕d8 would not have brought any relief in view of 24 ♕b3! (24 ♗xc4 bxc4 25 ♕c2! is also interesting, with the idea of 25...♕xd4 26 ♖cd1 ♕e5 27 ♘xa6!), and Black has no acceptable continuation: 24...♕xd4 25 g4! f5 26 ♖cd1! ♕e5 27 ♘d6! and wins.

24 ♗h5!

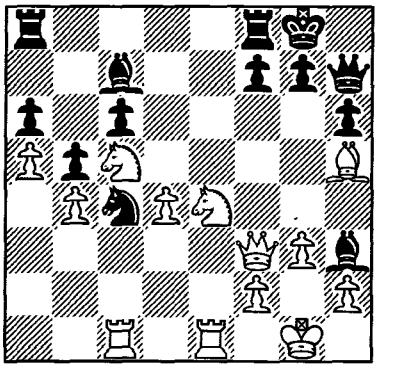
Karpov continues to strengthen his position, not allowing the opponent even a semblance of counterplay after 24 ♗xc4 bxc4 25 ♕e2 ♗f4 26 ♖a1 ♖fe8 27 ♕e4 ♔h8.

24...♕h7

The active 24...♕f5, in the hope of changing the course of the game in the complications after 25 ♖c3! ♕d5 26 g4! f5 27 ♖xh3 fxe4 would have resulted in a bad endgame: 28 ♗g6 ♘d6 29 ♖h5 ♕a2 (after 29...♕c4 30 ♕d2! ♖f6 31 ♖c1 the queen is lost) 30 ♕e2! ♕xe2 31 ♖xe2.

25 ♕f3

25 ♘d2!? ♘xd2 26 ♕xd2 ♕f5 27 ♕d1! ♖fd8 28 ♖e7 g6 29 ♗f3 ♗d6 30 ♖e1 is also advantageous to White – the chronic weakness of Black's queenside condemns him to lengthy suffering.



25...f5?

By conclusively shutting his strongest piece out of the game, Spassky effectively signs his own death warrant. Fascinating events would have developed in the event of 25...♗f5 26 ♘c3 ♖fc8. Now 27 ♕xc6 ♗f4 28 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 is not so clear, but the 27 d5! breakthrough would have provoked tactical complications, leading to a win for White: 27...♘e5 28 ♕d1 ♖d8 29 ♕d4 f6 30 ♘b7! ♖db8 31 dxc6 ♘d3 32 ♘d5 ♗e5 33 ♘e7+ ♔h8 34 ♘d6! ♗xd6 35 ♕xd6 ♖d8 36 ♕xd8+! ♖xd8 37 c7 ♖f8 38 ♗g6! ♗xg6 39 c8♕ ♗e8 40 ♘f5 ♘xe1 41 ♖xe1 ♕g8 42 ♕xa6 ♕d5 43 ♕d6 etc.

Botvinnik and Karpov consider 25...♕f5 to be the last chance, for example: 26 ♕xf5 (26 ♖c3 ♕d5!) 26...♗xf5 27 ♗f3 ♖fc8 (27...♖fd8? 28 ♘c3! ♖xd4 29 ♗xc6 ♖a7 30 ♗xb5!) 28 ♗e2! ♘d6 29 ♗d3 'with advantage to White' (Karpov). Indeed, after 29...♘xe4 30 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 31 ♘xe4 f5? 32 ♘c5 ♗d6 33 ♖e6 White has a winning position, but 29...♗h7! still sets some problems. In addition, 31...♗b8

is clearly stronger, with saving chances: 32 ♔g2 (32 d5 f5!) 32...♗a7 33 ♘d6 ♖d8 34 ♖xc6 ♗xd4 35 ♖e7 ♗c3!, and the outcome is not at all clear. Therefore it is better to play 29 ♘d2! ♗d8 30 ♘f3! ♖c7 31 ♘e5 with very strong pressure, or immediately 27 ♗e2!? ♘d6 28 ♗d3 ♘xe4 29 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 30 ♘xe4 f5 31 ♘c5 ♗d6 32 ♖e6 ♗xc5 33 dxc5 ♖ac8 34 ♖d1 with excellent chances in the rook endgame. Therefore after 27 ♗e2 (or 27 ♗f3 ♖fc8 28 ♗e2) it makes sense for Black to think about a pawn sacrifice: 27...♖fe8 28 ♗xc4 bxc4 29 ♖xc4 ♗d6! 30 f3 h5! 31 ♔f2 ♗f8, relying on the saving power of the two bishops.

26 ♘c3 g6 27 ♕xc6! gxh5 28 ♘d5! (the game is decided) **28...f4 29 ♖e7! ♕f5**

If 29...fxg3, with the faint hope of 30 ♖xh7?? gxf2+ 31 ♔h1 f1♕+ 32 ♖xf1 ♖xf1 mate, White wins most simply by 30 ♘f6+! ♖xf6 31 ♕xa8+ ♖f8 32 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 33 ♖xh7.

30 ♖xc7 ♖ae8 31 ♕xh6 ♖f7 32 ♖xf7

The fearfully strong 32 ♘d7! would have forced Black to give up his most valuable piece almost for nothing.

32...♔xf7 33 ♕xf4 ♖e2 34 ♕c7+ ♔f8 35 ♘f4 1-0

Black resigned, and Karpov sealed the match 4-1 (with six draws).

This game, like the match as whole, showed how completely unfounded was the theory of the 'clear head', professed by Spassky and his second. It became very obvious: to achieve consistent successes at high level, it was not enough to have only a general impression about the opening set-ups employed and a handful of ideas. Without extensive and exact knowledge, it is impossible to obtain the desired middlegame positions, and you have to be satisfied with those into which the opponent lures you, by no means the desired ones, so that your 'clear head' should have wide scope for creativity.

Alas, after this defeat Spassky did not find in himself the strength to readjust to serious, systematic work, and his results began steadily, year by year, to decline. And Karpov became for ever a difficult opponent for him: the overall score of their games with the classical time control was +13–1=20 in favour of the 12th world champion.

Karpov: 'Of all the matches that I have ever played, this was the one where chess itself and improvisation played the greatest role. Many years later Spassky said to me: "I can't play against you, because I don't understand your play, I don't understand the course of your thinking...") But to understand and acknowledge this, it was not enough for him to lose this match; he needed years of reflection, years of observing my play. Fortunately, this match did not spoil our relations. And the subsequent gradual departure from the chess elite of this wonderful fighter is not something that I would put down to me – it was not I who broke him, but Fischer. And how the struggle between us would have gone, if before me there had not been Fischer, one can only surmise.'

Here are two more opinions by interested persons – former world champions.

Tal: 'Karpov's victory over Spassky made a greater impression on me than Korchnoi's win against Petrosian. I was especially interested in the question of how Karpov would react to his first loss, when he was not accustomed to losing and had no immunity to defeats. But then came the 2nd game, and the 3rd: first a Caro-Kann Defence, and then 1 d4. You know, this is already the response not of a boy, but a man. I remember my 1965 match with Spassky. Somewhere after the 5th game they tried to persuade me: "Give up your 1 e4. Change the tune. Divert him." But by then I was already "wound up". But the present-day Karpov, although younger than that Tal, did not become wound up! Karpov's opening repertoire is trained, like the voice of a very good singer. He is careful with it, and he avoids disclosing it beforehand. Many of his

opening patterns remind one of Furman's handling of the opening. Here the young player trusts his mentor absolutely unquestioningly. And not without reason. Furman has an exceptionally subtle feeling for the opening and he has an enormous understanding of the game in general.'

Botvinnik: 'The match with Spassky was a kind of leap into the unknown: previously Karpov had not enjoyed any similar success. When he imposed on his opponent a forceful, uncompromising battle, Spassky suffered four defeats in nine games. After the eleventh game the score was 7-4 – the same, as in the match in Reykjavik. Karpov played brilliantly. It is hard to say where he displayed the greater mastery – in attack or defence. The calculation of variations was combined with skilful positional play. Karpov realised that he could surpass Spassky only if he gave everything to chess... This match clarified the situation at the chess summit. At least, for those who wanted to recognise this.'

Yes, this was a truly historic match – the intersection of two bright stars: one rising, and the other slowly setting, as at one time in the match between Keres and Euwe (cf. Volume 2). This was, in effect, Spassky's last real chance of fighting for the return of his world title! Three years later his final Candidates match with Korchnoi looked more like the agony of a great player (cf. the chapter 'Belgrade Revenge'), whereas against Karpov, especially at the start, Spassky was still full of strength and ambition, almost as in his best years.

Incidentally, I am surprised that so many experts predicted a win for Spassky. Apparently, at that time they did not yet pay sufficient attention to ratings – objective indicators of a player's strength. This is how the quartet of candidates looked on 1 July 1973: Karpov – 2660, Spassky – 2655, Korchnoi – 2650, Petrosian – 2640. That is, one can talk about an approximate equality of strength. Then Spassky gained points in the USSR Championship and his match with Byrne, as did Karpov in the Madrid tournament and his match with Polugayevsky. The FIDE ratings were next published on 1 May 1974, now taking account of the Candidates semi-final matches: Karpov – 2700(!), Korchnoi – 2670, Spassky – 2650, Petrosian – 2640.

These are not empty figures. Over a period of many years Karpov achieved consistently good results, and above all he demonstrated a consistently high standard of play. And he achieved his first creative peak in the encounter with Spassky. It was from this match, and not from April 1975, that the Anatoly Karpov era begins.

Coronation

So, there only remained the final match with Korchnoi. 'When I was asked how I rated my chances, I invariably replied: the play will show, but I myself was already thinking about Fischer. And no one heard me saying that this was not my cycle any more,' remembers Karpov. Botvinnik also believed in him: 'Don't worry,' he replied to the questions of chess fans, 'Karpov didn't win against Polugayevsky and Spassky, in order to lose to Korchnoi.'

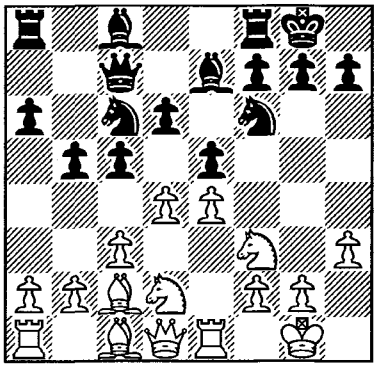
But first, a month after the Candidates semi-final matches, there was the World Olympiad (Nice, June 1974), timed to coincide with the 50th anniversary of FIDE. The organisers created excellent playing conditions, hoping that the 'Tournament of Nations' would become Fischer's first appearance in his capacity as world champion. The intrigue was stirred up by the fact that for the first time the USSR team would be led by Karpov – the new contender for the crown, who was dreaming of doing battle with the champion. Their clash was awaited with enormous interest. But, alas, Fischer did not arrive...

The splendid Soviet six – Karpov, Korchnoi, Spassky, Petrosian, reserves Tal and Kuzmin – went through the entire Olympiad without a single defeat and achieved one of the best results in history: 1. USSR – 46 out of 60; 2. Yugoslavia – 37½; 3. USA – 36½, etc.

Karpov played especially well. Like Tal in his time, in just two years he had risen from one of the reserves to board one. After five successive wins in the preliminary group, he added a sixth at the start of the final tournament – against Hort, and then, after a drawing respite, he also made short work of Unzicker.

Game 66
A.Karpov-W.Unzicker
World Olympiad, Nice 1974
Ruy Lopez C98

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘a5 (9...♘b8 – *Game Nos. 51, 70 and 102*) **10 ♗c2 c5 11 d4 ♕c7 12 ♘bd2 ♘c6**



An old variation of the Chigorin System, the popularity of which fell sharply after this game. Black began preferring 12...cxd4 13 cxd4 ♘c6! (this is rather better than 13...♗b7 – *Volume 4, Game No.54*).

13 d5!

The strongest continuation (Reshevsky and Fischer played 13 dxc5 – cf. *Volume 4, Game No.19*). For a long time the d5-pawn secures White a spatial advantage and the associated scope for manoeuvring his pieces.

13...♘d8

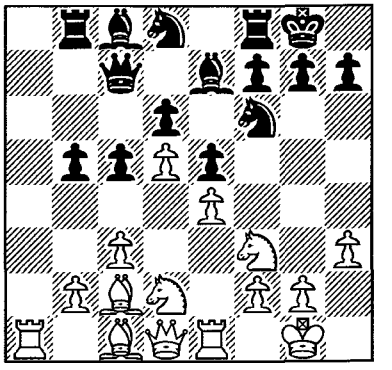
Following Rubinstein. After 13...♘a5 14 b3! the knight has only the b7-square. Here the game Geller-Mecking (Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970) can be considered a model example of White's play: 14...♗d7 15 ♘f1 ♘b7 16 ♘g3! (more flexible than 16 c4, Karpov-Andersson, Stockholm 1969) 16...c4 17 b4 ♖fc8 18 ♘f5 ♗f8 19 ♘h2 a5 20 ♖e3 axb4 21 cxb4 ♗xf5 22 exf5 c3 23 ♘g4 ♗e7 24 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 25 ♖e4! ♕d7 26 ♕f3 with an advantage.

14 a4 (Black's rooks are not connected, and this undermining move is bound to be unpleasant for him) **14...♖b8 15 axb5**

The fashion for the old move 13 d5 was revived by the game Stein-Ivkov (Amsterdam Interzonal 1964), where after 15 c4 ♗d7?! 16 axb5 axb5 17 cxb5 ♗xb5 18 ♗a4 ♖a8 19 ♖e3 ♘b7 20 ♖ea3 White seized control of the a-file. 15...b4 is sounder, then ...♘e8, ...g7-g6 and ...f7-f6 (Bogoljubow-Rubinstein, Baden-Baden 1925; Breslau 1925).

15...axb5

What should White play?

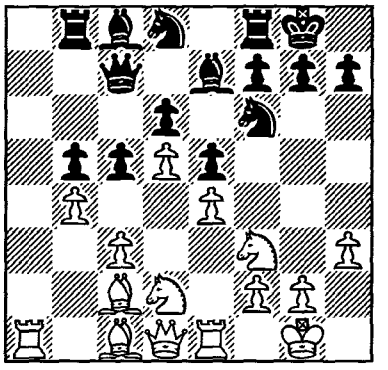


16 b4!

A typical modern procedure in such positions. White does not give up his offensive on the kingside, but, by opening a second front, he wants to create more favourable conditions for it. However, if the opponent makes a poor response, he can also achieve much on the queenside, by exploiting the a-file and the weakness of the b5-pawn (cf. the note to Black's 16th move).

After the straightforward 16 ♘f1 the great Akiba demonstrated a plan of defence back in the early 20th century, which immediately be-

came standard: 16...♘e8 17 g4 g6 18 ♘g3 ♘g7 19 ♔h1 f6 20 ♖g1 ♘f7 21 ♗e3 ♗d7 22 ♕e2 ♖a8 (22...♘g5!?) 23 ♘d2 ♔h8 24 b3 ♕b7 25 ♗d3 ♖a6! (Bernstein-Rubinstein, Ostend 1907), or 22 ♕f1 ♖a8 23 ♕g2 ♖xa1 24 ♖xa1 ♕b7 25 ♔h2 ♖a8 26 ♕f1 ♖a6! 27 ♘d2 ♕a8 (Thomas-Rubinstein, Baden-Baden 1925). Or 16 c4 b4 17 ♘f1 ♘e8 18 g4 g6 19 ♗h6 ♘g7 20 ♘e3 f6 21 ♔g2 ♘f7 with equality (Bogoljubow-Rubinstein, Berlin 1926).



16...♘b7

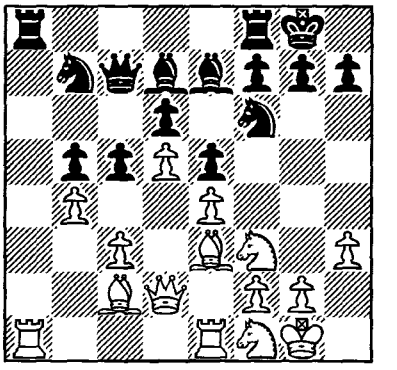
The helplessness of this knight constitutes a considerable problem for Black. Imitating Rubinstein, he would like to play 16...♘e8 with the intention of 17 ♘f1 g6 18 g4 ♘g7 19 ♘g3 f6 and ...♘f7, but here he has to reckon with 17 bxc5!, when both 17...dxc5 18 c4 b4 19 ♘b3 and 17...♕xc5 18 ♖e3 ♘b7 19 ♗a3 involve new drawbacks: in the first case the c5-pawn becomes a target, and in the second case – the b5-pawn.

16...c4 has usually been played, but this move too has an obvious drawback: White acquires the additional resource f2-f4, and after ...e5xf4 not only does Black acquire the e5-square, but White also gains the important d4-square for his knight. After 17 ♘f1 ♘e8 18 ♘3h2 the active 18...f5? is inappropriate: 19 exf5 (the e4-square becomes an important element of White's positional advantage) 19...♗xf5 20 ♗xf5 ♖xf5 21 ♗e3 ♖f8 22 ♘f3 ♘f6 23 ♘g3 ♘f7 24 ♖a7! ♖b7 25 ♖a5 (Geller-Smyslov, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970). 18...f6 is more restrained, but here too after 19 f4 ♘f7 20 ♘f3 g6 21 f5 ♘g7 22 g4 Black is in difficulties (Karpov-Spassky, 41st USSR Championship, Moscow 1973).

17 ♘f1 ♗d7 18 ♗e3

It is less promising to play 18 ♗d2 ♖a8 19 ♘e3 ♖fc8 20 ♔h2 ♖xa1 21 ♕xa1 ♕d8! 22 ♕a7 ♖a8! 23 ♕xb7 ♖b8 24 ♕a7 ½-½ (Spassky-Korchnoi, 1st matchgame, Kiev 1968).

18...♖a8 19 ♕d2



19...♖fc8?

Black choose an incorrect set-up of his heavy pieces and because of this he loses the battle for the a-file. The correct way was pointed out by Karpov himself: 19...♖fb8 20 ♗d3 ♕c8!, after which Black exchanges one pair of rooks and increases his chances of a successful defence.

20 ♗d3 g6 21 ♘g3 ♗f8 (fighting for the a-file would have lost a pawn: 21...♕d8? 22 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 23 bxc5 ♘xc5 24 ♗xc5 dxc5 25 ♘xe5) **22 ♖a2! c4**

The invasion of the queen after 22...♖xa2 23 ♕xa2 cxb4 24 cxb4 ♕c3 would merely have uncovered another weakness in Black's position – the b5-pawn: 25 ♕b1 ♕a3 26 ♖c1 ♖xc1+ 27 ♗xc1 ♕a4 28 ♗e3 ♗e7 29 ♘e2.

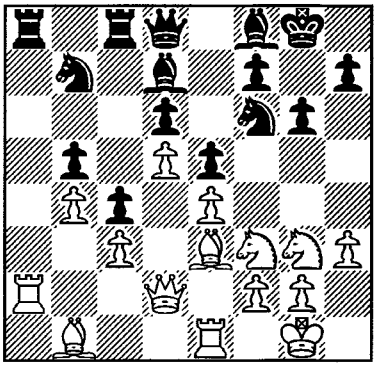
23 ♗b1

The aim of this move, preventing the rapid concentration of white pieces on the a-file, is nothing to do with overprotecting the e4-pawn. Karpov does not want to allow his op-

ponent the slightest counter-chances, and so he radically prevents ...f7-f5.

23...♕d8

'Also after 23...♘d8 24 ♖e2 there would have been no contest for the a-file. In addition, Black would also have had to reckon with 24 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 25 ♗h6.' (Karpov)



24 ♗a7!

This original manoeuvre became a well-known technique in the fight for the open file after the 10th game of the Spassky-Karpov match (*Game No.64*). There Karpov managed to defend himself, and now he himself tests its effectiveness. White temporarily blocks the a-file, concentrating his heavy pieces on it under cover of the bishop, and at a convenient moment, after retreating the bishop, he invades the opponent's position. Largely because of the bad position of his knight at b7, it is hard to Black to counter this obvious intention.

Incidentally, in a similar situation (true, in another classical opening – the Queen's Gambit) I employed the manoeuvre ♗d3-h7 to seize control of the h-file (Kasparov-Karpov, 21st matchgame, Moscow 1985).

24...♘e8 25 ♗c2 ♘c7 26 ♖ea1 ♕e7 27 ♗b1 ♗e8

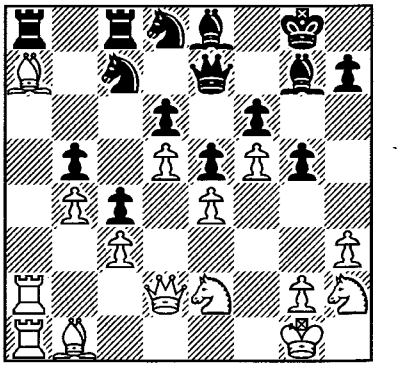
'Black has done his best to prepare for play on the queenside, by linking his forces. But White, exploiting his spatial advantage and the great manoeuvrability of his pieces, begins action on the other flank.' (Karpov)

28 ♘e2 ♘d8 29 ♘h2 ♗g7 30 f4! f6?

Positional capitulation. 30...exf4 31 ♘xf4 f6 32 ♘f3 ♘f7 33 ♘d4 ♘e5 was essential, allowing the opponent a strong point in the centre, but gaining the outpost at e5.

31 f5 g5?!

This pawn should not have been moved. 31...gxf5 32 exf5 ♘f7 33 ♗e3 ♕f8 (Karpov) 34 ♘g4 was hardly any better for Black. The toughest defence was to stay put, avoiding any pawn advances. Now, however, the light squares on Black's kingside are weakened, and Karpov begins consistently carrying out an advantageous operation to exchange the light-squared bishops.



32 ♗c2! ♗f7

The weakness of the light-squared periphery cannot be eliminated: 32...h5 33 ♗d1 ♔h7 34 ♘g3 h4 (34...♔h6? 35 h4!) 35 ♘gf1 ♘f7 36 ♗h5 and wins.

33 ♘g3 ♘b7 34 ♗d1! h6?!

This pointless advance, which merely weakens the light squares conclusively, should have been avoided.

35 ♗h5 ♕e8 36 ♕d1! ♘d8 37 ♖a3 ♔f8 38 ♖1a2 ♔g8 39 ♘g4 ♔f8 40 ♘e3 ♔g8 41 ♗xf7+ ♘xf7 42 ♕h5! ♘d8

If 42...♘h8 Karpov gives the amusing variation 43 ♘g4 ♕xh5 44 ♘xh5 ♔f7 45 ♗b6 ♖xa3 46 ♖xa3 ♖a8 47 ♖xa8 ♘xa8 48 ♗d8 with complete zugzwang!

43 ♕g6! (thanks to the pawn having moved to h6) **43...♔h8 44 ♘h5! 1-0**

Black resigns: there is no point in suffering after 44...♕f7 45 ♘g4 ♘e8 46 ♗b6.

'An extraordinary phenomenon, a triumph of supreme strategy,' the press wrote about this game. And indeed, it is a classic example of how to play positions with a closed centre. 'When after the game Unzicker in Russian suddenly cursed his position "with this idiotic black knight, which simply cannot leap out of its cage," I nearly fell off my chair in surprise,' related Anatoly. Meanwhile, Tal already remarked here that playing to restrict the mobility of an enemy knight was one of Karpov's favourite strategic methods.

After gaining a further three wins with White he achieved the best result on board one (+10=4) without any visible tension. Karpov did not play in the last two rounds, since as a contender for the crown he was taking part in the work of the FIDE Congress, which had to approve the regulations for the world championship match the following year. The other contender, Korchnoi, replaced his young colleague on board one, after asking him to speak at the Congress on behalf of them both.

Karpov: 'We agreed to fight to the bitter end against three of Fischer's demands: 1) an unlimited match; 2) to ten wins; 3) with a 9-9 score, victory would be awarded to the world champion. However, after our match, which he lost, Korchnoi began saying that Fischer's demands were justified, and that they should have been accepted. I think that this was not very nice on his part.'

Why did Korchnoi change his position? He spoke out publicly on this vexed question in an interview on the eve of the historic 32nd game of the match in Baguio (1978) and then in his book *Antichess*:

'With the score at 5-5, after three months of intensive struggle, I took a quite different view on the haggling that preceded the passing of the chess crown from Fischer to Karpov... Had not Fischer been right, when he demanded that the world champion should defend his title with a two-point advantage – that the challenger should win by a score of 10-8, but that with a score of 9-9 the champion would retain his title? Yes, now I realised that this was quite natural: the world champion deserves it, to say nothing of the fact that, with the scores level, further play to the first win is a pure lottery, and whoever wins, it is no longer convincing!'

But in the summer of 1974 the two 'Ks' were still presenting a united front, expressing the Soviet point of view. The atmosphere at the Congress was extremely heated – after ultimatums sent by the world champion by telegram the question was basically this: 'Either FIDE or Fischer.' Therefore Karpov's speech provoked a mixed reaction. Roshal: 'Some of the delegates interrupted him, and the chairman did not support him, but, on the contrary, remarked that he was repeating what had been said earlier. Karpov blushed angrily, was silent for almost a minute, and then quite calmly added: 'I consider these remarks to be disrespectful.' And he stepped down into the hall, where he was applauded by some of those who only just before had been preventing him from speaking.'

As a result of the work of two congresses – this and the extraordinary one (March 1975) – all Fischer's demands were met, apart from one: that with a 9-9 score the champion would retain his title (more details about these events are given in Volume 4). His famous 'I resign my FIDE world chess champion title' declaration was sent by Bobby to Nice, which provoked a rhetorical question by Najdorf: 'Why, if Fischer is giving up his title, is the final Candidates match not being held under world championship match regulations?'

The Karpov-Korchnoi match (Moscow, autumn 1974), which effectively became a clash for the world championship, was played to five wins by one of the participants, but with a limit of 24 games – fully comparable with the regulations of previous matches for the crown. What were the pre-match forecasts?

'During the Olympiad in Nice, Timman mentioned that, as before, Korchnoi still gets

into time-trouble. Karpov, by contrast, plays easily, with a big reserve on his clock, and this, in Jan's opinion, gives him an advantage in the match. Andersson and Portisch considered the two players' chances to be roughly equal. Najdorf gave preference to Karpov, while Hort, drawing attention to Karpov's consistently good form, at the same time suggested that Korchnoi had been husbanding his strength somewhat in Nice, and that the final match would become a "war of nerves". Soviet grandmasters were usually cautious in their predictions. Polugayevsky mentioned that on Karpov's side were his age, consistency of results, and constant and steady progress ("He played much more strongly against Spassky than against me"). Taimanov spoke about the fact that Korchnoi sometimes "exposes himself" too much, and about the stability of Karpov's play and his growing strength: "In my opinion, sooner or later he will be world champion". To a certain extent this pronouncement was similar to the opinion of Larsen – in chess style he was closer to Korchnoi, but the voice of reason suggested: Karpov.' (Roshal)

Not long before the match, Karpov's training staff received a powerful reinforcement: Furman and Razuvaev were joined by Efim Geller – a player of encyclopaedic knowledge and brilliant attacking style. According to Razuvaev, somewhere towards the finish of the match Geller expressed his dissatisfaction with Karpov's play to Furman and angrily repeated: 'Tolya must be re-taught: he should play more aggressively!' Furman listened for a long time to his colleague, silently smoking a cigarette, and then said: 'Do you know what, Fima? If you don't like it, find yourself another lad and teach him to play how you think he should. But I am satisfied about everything in Tolya and I like the way he plays!' An eloquent little scene: it is well known that Furman related to Karpov with paternal tenderness.

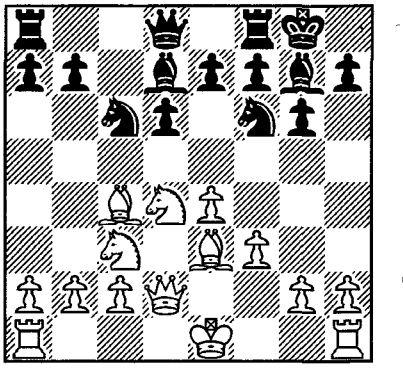
However, Geller had no grounds for criticism at the start of the match. After a fighting draw in the 1st game, Karpov gained a brilliant combinative win in the 2nd, employing one of the deep preparations of Efim Petrovich.

Game 67

A.Karpov-V.Korchnoi

Candidates Match,
Moscow 1974, 2nd game
Sicilian Defence B78

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 ♘c6 8 ♕d2 0-0 9 ♗c4 (9 g4 – *Game No.87*) **9...♗d7** (9...♘xd4?! – *Volume 4, Game No.52*)



10 h4

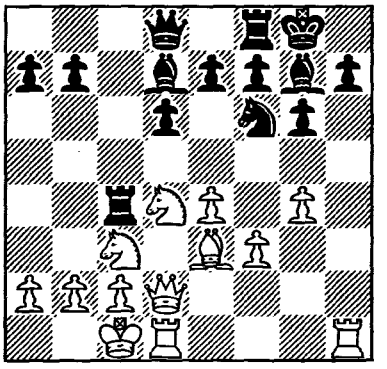
The fashion of those years – a very sharp variation with the advance of the h-pawn. Nowadays the flexible 10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 ♗b3 ♘e5 12 ♔b1 is in vogue, and if 12...♘c4, then 13 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 14 g4!, preventing ...h7-h5.

10...♖c8 11 ♗b3 ♘e5 12 0-0-0 ♘c4

This game, naturally, did not 'kill the Dragon', but it forced Black to work out new methods of defence. Later practice showed that better chances of restraining the attack and creating counterplay are given by the radical move 12...h5!, introduced into grandmaster practice by Miles and Sosonko. For details, see Volume 6.

13 ♗xc4 ♖xc4 14 h5 ♘xh5 15 g4 ♘f6

One of the best known *tabiyas* of the Dragon.



16 ♘de2!?

The prelude to an interesting novelty. 17 e5! and 18 g5 is threatened, but the following comment by Karpov shows that even in the analysis of sharp positions he endeavoured to rely on reasoning of a general nature:

'An attempt to support this move with variations was made by E.Chumak, a player from Dnepropetrovsk, who published an article on this topic in 1972. The logical basis for the retreat of the knight from the centre is roughly as follows. The c3-point is a very important one in the arrangement of the white pieces, against which Black concentrates his threats. Here a typical exchange sacrifice (...♖xc3) often occurs, when the opponent gains a strong attack (it is noteworthy that after the doubling of the white pawns on the c-file, Black's position is so rich in possibilities that also without an attack, even in the endgame, he can maintain the balance – this was splendidly demonstrated in his games by the outstanding grandmaster Leonid Stein). Thus the main idea of 16 ♘de2 is to support the c3-point. In addition, from e2 the knight can easily be switched for a direct attack on the enemy king.'

Apart from the prophylactic move in the game, White has a wide choice of attacking plans. Here are a few illustrations, arranged more or less in chronological order:

1) 16 e5 ♘xg4 (or 16...dxe5 17 ♘b3 ♖c6! 18 ♕h2 ♖xc3! 19 bxc3 ♕c8! with counterplay) 17 fxg4 ♗xg4 18 ♖dg1 dxe5 19 ♖xg4 h5! 20 ♖xh5 ♖xd4! 21 ♗xd4 exd4 22 ♘e4 (or 22 ♘d5) 22...gxh5 23 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 24 ♕g5+ ♔h7 25 ♕xh5+ ♔g7 ½-½ (Chumak-Okhotnik, Dnepropetrovsk 1970);

2) 16 ♗h6 ♘xe4 17 ♕e3 ♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♘f6 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♖h2 (or 20 ♖h4 ♖g8 Tseshkovsky-Miles, Wijk aan Zee 1989) 20...♖h8 (20...♕c7 has also been played, but not 20...♕a5?! 21 ♘b3 ♕xa2 22 ♕xe7 ♕a3+ 23 ♔b1 ♖e8 24 ♕xd6 ♕xd6 25 ♖xd6 with advantage to White, as in the source game Geller-Korchnoi, 4th matchgame, Moscow 1971) 21 ♘b3 ♗c6 22 g5 ♘h5 23 f4 ♖e8 24 f5 ♕b6 25 ♘d4 ♕c5! (Kasparov-Piket, Tilburg 1989);

3) 16 ♘d5 e6 17 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 18 ♕h2 ♖fc8 19 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 20 c3?! b5! 21 ♗h6 ♗xh6+ 22 ♕xh6+ ♔e7 23 ♕d2 b4, seizing the initiative (Geller-Ivkov, Amsterdam 1974), or 20 ♔b1 e5 with sharp play (Kupreichik-Khalifman, 54th USSR Championship, Minsk 1987);

4) 16 ♘b3 ♖e8! 17 e5 (17 ♗h6 ♗h8 18 ♗g5 ♕c8, as Khalifman played in 1991 against Nunn and Short) 17...♘xg4 18 fxg4 ♗xg4 19 ♖dg1 dxe5 20 ♕h2 (after 20 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 21 ♘a5(d2) ♖xc3! 22 bxc3 h5 the armada of black pawns is too strong) 20...h5 with chances for both sides;

5) 16 ♔b1 (the fashion of the 1990s) 16...♕c7?! (16...♗xg4?! is also insufficient: 17 fxg4 ♘xg4 18 ♕e2 Anand-Topalov, Hilversum 1993) 17 g5 ♘h5 18 ♘d5 ♕d8 19 b3 ♖c8 20 ♘e2 e6 21 ♘df4 ♘xf4 22 ♘xf4 ♕c7 23 ♕h2 h5 24 gxh6 ♗e5 25 h7+ ♔h8 26 ♗d4 and White has a dangerous attack (Anand-Khalifman, Moscow rapidplay 1995), but 16...♖e8 is better.

On the whole, practice has shown that Black has adequate defensive resources in all these variations.

16...♕a5

To judge by the speed with which the two players made their moves (thereby emphasising the depth of their home preparation), this queen sortie was part of an aggressive defensive plan thought up beforehand, involving, as shown by the game, a certain risk. Korchnoi is

ready to exchange his bishop at g7 for the sake of rapidly intensifying his attacking potential.

Now, summing up the results of the analyses, it can be concluded that Black was wrong not to play 16...♖e8!, enabling him to avoid the exchange of his g7-bishop, which cements together his king's defences. After the sharp prelude 17 ♗h6 ♗h8 18 e5 ♘xg4! 19 fxg4 the play can proceed in two ways:

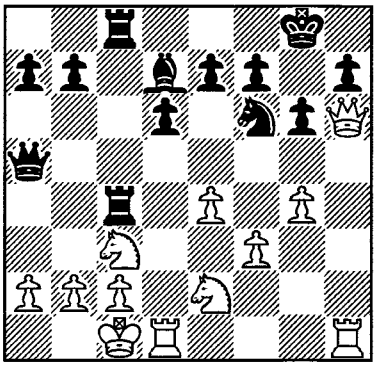
1) 19...♗xg4 20 exd6 ♕xd6 21 ♕xd6 exd6 22 ♖xd6 (Beliavsky-Filguth, Caracas 1976), and despite White's material advantage, the position is unclear after 22...♗e5 23 ♖d3 f6;

2) 19...♗xe5 20 ♗f4 ♕a5 (20...♗g7!? has also several times shown itself to be good) 21 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 – this position has occurred in dozens of games, and Black can be satisfied with the results.

17 ♗h6! ♗xh6

In his time grandmaster Simagin successfully showed that for the sake of retaining the g7-bishop Black can go in for an exchange sacrifice – 17...♗h8 18 ♗xf8 ♔xf8, and this became a typical procedure for creating counterplay in such positions. But here this is ineffective, since there are no targets in White's position that can be attacked. Botvinnik judged this position to be theoretically won, but I would add that Black nevertheless retains possibilities of continuing the fight.

18 ♕xh6 ♖fc8



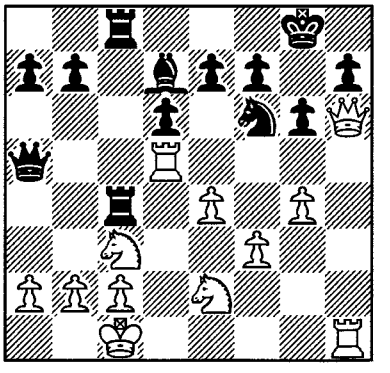
19 ♖d3

'Up till this point both players had been moving almost instantly, but here Korchnoi thought for a long time. And indeed, he had something to think about... The novelty 19 ♖d3!, overprotecting the c3-point, in a number of variations simultaneously frees the knight at e2 for the attack.' (Karpov)

At the start of a match Korchnoi used to employ a risky strategy, based on the one-off employment of rare openings in his repertoire. This was apparently how he conceived the idea of playing the 'Dragon', which at that time had the reputation of being a complicated variation, with numerous positions lacking a clear evaluation. During the three previous years he had employed it in only three games, but what games! Twice in his Candidates match with Geller (1971) and a month before that in the 5th game of a training match with... Karpov.

Therefore the appearance of the 'Dragon' was predictable, and Karpov's powerful team had prepared their protégé well, in addition developing a new plan for White. To all appearances, Korchnoi's preparation for the duel with his young opponent was not so thorough and deep.

Meanwhile, analysis shows that 19 ♖d5, which before this game was considered the main move, is no less effective than Karpov's novelty, the main virtues of which are its unexpectedness and the enhanced solidity of the white king's shelter.



Analysis diagram

Botvinnik writes that Black had a choice between a slightly inferior endgame after 19...♕d8 and the complications following 19...♖4c5?, 'which, apparently, were what Korchnoi had in mind.' However, there are no 'complications' after the obvious 20 g5 ♘h5 21 ♘f4. But 19...♖8c5 can be considered: 20 g5 ♘h5 21 ♖xc5 ♖xc5! (21...♕xc5? 22 ♘d5 ♖xc2+ 23 ♔d1! is bad for Black) 22 ♘f4 ♖xg5 23 ♘cd5 ♖xd5 24 ♘xd5 ♕d8 – Black's position is not easy to breach.

It only remains to study 19...♕d8 more carefully. Chumak, and later Botvinnik, considered only 20 g5 ♘h5 21 ♘f4 ♕f8 22 ♕xf8+ ♔xf8 23 ♘xh5 gxh5 24 ♖xh5 ♔g7 with somewhat the better ending for White.

The energetic 20 e5 dxe5 21 ♖d2 is more dangerous (for White too!). Karpov looked only at 21 g5 ♘h5 22 ♘g3 ♕f8 23 ♖xh5 gxh5 24 ♖xd7 ♕xh6 25 gxh6 with the evaluation: 'the outside passed pawn gives Black good counter-chances.' This is indeed, so since the h-pawn suddenly becomes fearfully strong: 25...h4! 26 ♘f5 ♔f8 27 ♖xe7 h3 28 ♖xe5 ♖8c5 29 ♖xc5 ♖xc5 30 ♘g3 h2, and it is now White's position that gives some cause for alarm.

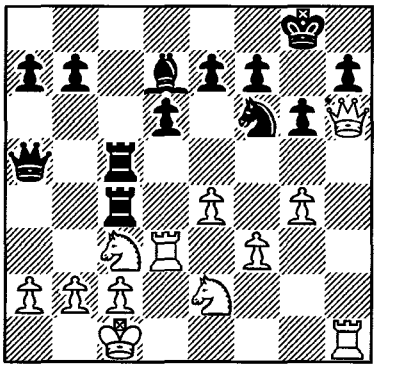
After 21 ♖d2 it is bad to play 21...♕e8? because of 22 ♘d5!, but 21...♕f8 22 ♕xf8+ ♖xf8 23 g5 ♗c6 24 gxf6 exf6 leads to a complicated endgame. 21...♕c7! 22 ♘d5 ♖xc2+ 23 ♔b1 ♖xd2 24 ♘xc7 ♖xe2 25 ♘d5 ♖e8 is even more promising, as played in one correspondence game. Black's excellent compensation for the queen allows him to think of more than a draw. 20 g5 is definitely stronger than 20 e5, but Black's choice between 19...♕d8 and 19...♖8c5 is not so obvious.

19...♖4c5?

The first independent move – and immediately a decisive mistake. After thinking for more than half an hour in an unfamiliar and undoubtedly critical situation, out of four possibilities Korchnoi chose the one that led most quickly and by force... to a loss!

Karpov agrees with Botvinnik, that the best practical chance was 19...♕d8. 'Black has nothing worse to fear than a slightly inferior endgame.' (Botvinnik). He obviously had in mind 20 g5 ♘h5 21 ♘f4 ♕f8 22 ♘xh5 ♕xh6 23 gxh6 gxh5. The argument about the virtues of this endgame ceased to be topical after Shamkovich published a new idea – 20 ♘d5! ♖xc2+ (some consider that 20...e6 21 ♘xf6+ ♕xf6 22 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 is safer, although after 23 c3 White's initiative is undisputed) 21 ♔b1 e6 22 ♘dc3! Black loses the exchange, gaining two pawns in return – which would be quite sufficient, except that the initiative remains with White.

Let us examine the consequences of 19...♖8c5, which before the match Karpov and his trainers considered to be best.



Analysis diagram

Indeed, after 20 g5 ♘h5 (but not 20...♖xg5 21 ♖d5!) the variations 21 ♘f4 ♖xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♖xg5 23 ♘d5 ♖xd5 24 exd5 ♕xd5 and 21 ♘g3 ♖xc3 22 ♖xc3 ♖xg5 (things are simpler for White after 22...♖xc3 23 ♘xh5! gxh5 24 ♕xh5 ♔f8 25 ♕h6+ ♔e8 26 ♕xh7 ♕xg5+ 27 ♔b1 e5 28 bxc3) 23 ♘f5 ♖xf5 24 exf5 ♕xf5 (24...♗xf5?? 25 ♖xh5 gxh5 26 ♕g5+ ♔f8 27 ♖c8+) lead to similar positions with an unusual balance of forces, making it hard to give a categorical evaluation. Although, of course, it is better to be playing White.

Neither Karpov nor Botvinnik even mentions 19...♗e6!?, a very natural way of defend-

ing: 20 g5 ♘h5 21 ♘g3 ♕e5! 22 ♘xh5 gxh5 23 ♕xh5 ♕g7! Here 24 f4 suggests itself, but 24...d5! 25 ♖hd1! ♕f8! 26 exd5 ♗f5 promises Black counterplay (for example, 27 ♖d4 ♖xc3! 28 bxc3 ♖xc3 29 ♖1d2 ♕c8 30 ♕e2 ♕c5).

20 g5!

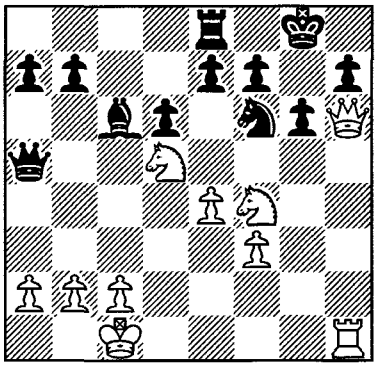
'After thinking for 18 minutes in search of a refutation of 19...♖4c5, I found a fine forcing combination.' (Karpov)

20...♖xg5

20...♘h5 also loses in view of 21 ♘f4! ♖xc3 (21...♖xg5 22 ♖d5! ♖xd5 23 ♘cxd5 ♕c5 24 ♘xe7+ ♔h8 25 ♘xc8) 22 ♖xc3 ♖xc3 23 ♘xh5! gxh5 24 ♕xh5 ♔f8 25 ♕h6+ ♔e8 26 ♕xh7 ♗e6 27 ♕h8+ ♔d7 28 ♕xc3.

21 ♖d5! ♖xd5 22 ♘xd5 ♖e8 23 ♘ef4 ♗c6

'Otherwise ♘xf6+ and ♘d5 with mate. If 23...♗e6 I had prepared 24 ♘xe6 fxe6 25 ♘xf6+ exf6 26 ♕xh7+ ♔f8 27 ♕xb7 ♕g5+ 28 ♔b1 ♖e7 29 ♕b8+ ♖e8 30 ♕xa7 (but not 30 ♖h8+?? ♔g7, and in view of the threat of ...♕g1 mate it is Black who wins) 30...♖e7 31 ♕b8+ ♖e8 32 ♕xd6+. A rare and distinctive type of "windmill"!' (Karpov). True, 28 ♔d1! is simpler.



24 e5!

Cutting off the black queen's path to the kingside. 'The attacking mechanism demonstrated by Karpov, with the main blows being landed on the 5th rank, occurs here for the first time and creates a highly artistic impression.' (Petrosian). White fails to win by 24 ♘xf6+ exf6 25 ♘h5 ♕g5+! 26 ♕xg5 fxg5 27 ♘f6+ ♔g7 28 ♘xe8+ ♗xe8 (Karpov) 29 ♖d1 f5 30 ♖xd6 ♗c6.

24...♗xd5 25 exf6 exf6 26 ♕xh7+ (of course, not 26 ♘h5?? ♖e1+) **26...♔f8 27 ♕h8+ 1-0**

Black resigned in view of 27...♔e7 28 ♘xd5+ ♕xd5 29 ♖e1+.

Then, after three draws, Karpov also won the 6th game: on this occasion Korchnoi answered with the exotic for him 1...e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 and quickly ended up in a difficult position. After this he finally switched to the well-tested French Defence and did not lose again with Black, displaying remarkable willpower and tenacity. Beginning with the 7th game, there followed a series of nine successive draws! In the 13th, the most exciting and hard-fought, Karpov played recklessly for a win in a time scramble and was nearly made to pay for it. After missing a win on the 34th move, during the resumption Korchnoi tried for a long time to make something of his remaining advantage, and created a dangerous passed a-pawn, but Karpov defended excellently and gained a draw on the 97th move.

In the opening of the 17th game (a Catalan) Korchnoi gained an obvious advantage, but he delayed somewhere and in search of ways to strengthen his position he ended up in severe time-trouble. On the 30th move he made a crude oversight, lost material, and was forced to resign immediately after the time control. The score became 3-0 in Karpov's favour, or, counting by the old regulations, 10-7.

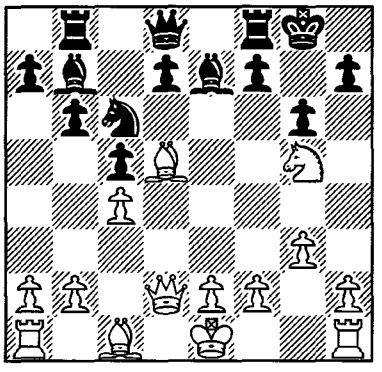
And Anatoly decided that the matter was settled: 'After this the match should have finished somewhere around the 20th game... Why didn't this happen? It was all because of the "seditious" thought: the match is decided, so why are any additional efforts needed; all I have to do is turn up and sign the score-sheets of the last few games...' But years later he admitted: 'I decided that it was time to remember about Fischer, that for the battle with him

I had to preserve both strength, and ideas. Confidence developed into assurance: I already felt that I was the winner.'

The result of this premature relaxation was two losses – in the 19th and 21st games, which sharply aggravated the match situation. Before this Karpov had never suffered more than two defeats in any competition – what would happen now?

Precisely during those days I was passing through Moscow – returning home from a session of the Botvinnik School. I remember how Mikhail Moiseevich commented on the games from the match, appearing at the Scientists' Club in Dubna (before that, at the February session, he had covered the Karpov-Polugayevsky match in the same way, and all these commentaries formed the basis of his future book *Anatoly Karpov: His Road to the World Championship*). And I was fortunate enough to see the 21st game live: I was taken to it by my trainer Alexander Nikitin.

For the first time in my life I experienced the amazing match atmosphere – the reverential silence in the auditorium, occasionally broken by rumbles of admiration or disappointment, and the seething of the press centre, where Nikitin took me 'to observe the thinking of the titans'. Then he took me into the auditorium and left. Glancing at the enormous demonstration board, I was stupefied.



With the aid of a long pole, the demonstrator had just reproduced Karpov's move **12...♖b8?** on the board. What on earth?! I don't understand: White has the winning stroke 13 ♘xh7! While Korchnoi was thinking over his reply, Nikitin came back. I whispered to him: 'Knight h7!' And he merely replied: 'Yes...' Obviously others had also noticed this move: the audience became noticeably animated.

Indeed, after **13 ♘xh7! ♖e8** (alas, 13...♔xh7 14 ♕h6+ ♔g8 15 ♕xg6+ leads to unavoidable mate) **14 ♕h6 ♘e5 15 ♘g5 ♗xg5 16 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 17 ♕xg5 ♗xd5 18 0-0 ♗xc4 19 f4** Black resigned. It was a pity, of course, that the game concluded so quickly and I did not see a genuine battle... Even so, this was my first encounter with big-time chess, and as an 11-year-old boy, it left an indelible impression on me.

It need hardly be said how anxious the Soviet sports officials became, having pinned their hopes on Karpov, when three games before the finish the match score became 3-2. According to an eye-witness, immediately after the catastrophic 21st game Baturinsky, the head of the chess section of the USSR Sports Committee, went up to Anatoly and suggested that he should urgently discuss the situation in the event of a drawn match, but Karpov forcefully replied: 'I am leading and I do not intend to draw the match!' I should remind you that, according to the regulations, in the event of a drawn match everything would be decided by a drawing of lots. And, as has already been mentioned in Volume 2, the Sports Committee officials tried at that time to persuade the FIDE President Euwe, who had arrived in Moscow, to change the regulations... Fortunately for chess, Euwe stood his ground.

Karpov also stood his ground, making three draws, although it was not easy for him to endure such an absurd and brutal rout. It transpires that earlier, after the 5th game, in which the same opening variation occurred, Petrosian had advised him not to play it any more, but Anatoly had forgotten his advice...

'One has to give Petrosian his due: his sense of danger was phenomenal.'

The 23rd game, his last with Black, presented a particular difficulty: how to gain a draw? Here Botvinnik gave him some good advice, reminding him of a variation of the Queen's Indian Defence from the 21st game of the Euwe-Alekhine return match (1937). 'If Alekhine played this, it means that it's not bad,' said Botvinnik. And indeed, Karpov confidently gained a draw.

And the concluding, 24th game resembled the last, 30th game of the Alekhine-Euwe match (1935). In a difficult position, a pawn down, realising that he had no chances of success, Korchnoi (following Alekhine's example) offered a draw. And Karpov immediately accepted, since this signified his victory in the match: 3-2 with 19 draws, or 12½-11½ under the old system.

'I think that I should have won this match by a bigger margin,' the winner stated. 'Because I myself know that at some point I relaxed, at some point I played worse than I could have done.' And the loser, despite a provocative interview, which had serious consequences for him (cf. p.79), admitted: 'I felt extremely tired, so that in the last three games I was unable to give my opponent a genuine fight.'

A few months later it transpired that effectively this had been a match for the world championship. But the paradox of the 1974 cycle is that, in the creative sense, the function of a match for the world championship was fulfilled by the semi-final encounter between Karpov and Spassky, which had an enormous influence on the further development of chess. It is for this reason that I have given an almost complete commentary on it, whereas from the final match I have given only one game, the most vivid – although, as Petrosian said, 'such a game can serve as the creative rehabilitation of an entire match.' But the splendid pinnacle of the Karpov-Korchnoi confrontation was to be the match in Baguio four years later...

Spassky: 'This was Anatoly Karpov's cycle. All his matches – against Polugayevsky, against me, and against Korchnoi – he won well. At the given moment Karpov is objectively without doubt the strongest player. In its duration the final Candidates match was equivalent to previous matches for the world championship. Karpov's play was, so to speak, technically powerful; he did not fully disclose his creative potential. Such a strategic plan appears to me to have been the correct one. It has to be borne in mind that it was Karpov who was the first to endure the increased strain of the new regulations for selecting the challenger.'

Tal: 'In the cycle of Candidates matches the future winner performed as though in three roles: with Polugayevsky this was, despite his youth, a mature psychologist, capable of subtly exploiting the human weaknesses in his opponent's character; with Spassky – a genuinely inspired player, equally formidable in attack and tenacious in defence; with Korchnoi – not a boy, but a man, able to endure an encounter unparalleled in its competitive intensity. Karpov is all the time progressing and is still far from his peak. I have no doubt that by the time of his match with Fischer he will be even stronger.'

'In the final the battle was different in character to the match with Spassky. On this occasion Karpov played more prudently, avoiding risk as far as possible. He already sensed his strength, and he had to win the match, and that was all!' wrote Botvinnik in April 1975, and he pointed out the 23-year-old grandmaster's three vulnerable points, on the elimination of which he still had to work: inadequate physical condition, non-indifference to praise (it was supposedly because of this that after his third win he 'lost his respect for his opponent and his sense of danger – and the strongest feature of Karpov's competitive strength disappeared'), and comparatively modest opening arsenal. But he concludes his diagno-

sis with these words: 'Anatoly Karpov is undoubtedly the strongest chess fighter of our time.'

Euwe: 'The final Candidates match was a difficult, exhausting struggle, and was interesting in the sense of being a psychological duel between two very evenly-matched opponents.' At the closing of the match the FIDE President was asked what would happen if Fischer did not accept the challenger's challenge by the expiry of the established date. Euwe replied: 'If by 1 April 1975 Fischer does not inform me that he is accepting the challenge, I will fly to Moscow to proclaim Karpov the 12th world champion.'

But there was still some possibility that the match with Fischer would take place, and the USSR Sports Committee did everything possible to ensure that Karpov prepared thoroughly. Early in 1975 several training sessions were held with the participation of the country's best chess experts. Of considerable interest are the memoirs of an eye-witness to these events, Yuri Razuvaev, which are published here for the first time:

'A year earlier, before his match with Polugayevsky, Anatoly was lazy about working – he preferred to mess about with stamps, play cards and billiards, or pass the time playing blitz (here he was fearfully strong: he would crush everyone in turn, even Tal). Apparently he had not yet got used to the cycle. He was a genuine natural talent: in his childhood he studied Capablanca's games – and he began playing. He was a purely practical player, a competitor! Well, of course, then Furman did a great deal for him... But when Anatoly started working, he worked very well: he actively participated in the analysis and made a mass of discoveries. Moreover, it was always important for him that someone was "playing" against him. Once every hour or so he would change colour, and "play" the same position with both White and with Black: he was as though training his playing skills. It was essential for him constantly to feel resistance – then he would be turned on and find the "guiding thread". I was staggered at how "omnivorous" he was: he would play all the standard positions equally well with both colours. Apparently it was here that his unique feeling for position was displayed. I have seen many world champions, but this was unusual.

'Of course, Geller's influence cannot be discounted, but another player who had a great influence on Karpov was Tal. For some reason it is customary to say of Tal only that "he calculated variations like a computer", and few mention his unique understanding of chess, his ability instantly to evaluate a position. Such depth is something that I have not seen in anyone! Of course, Geller was a fantastically deep player, but Tal had a more subtle feeling for position. He played modern, ultra-dynamic chess. Thanks to his evaluating ability he would very quickly grasp the essence of the problem and decide on the direction of work in any highly complicated position. In this sense he was completely unique! True, in his searchings Tal was rather lazy and he would usually suggest: "We'd do better to play his position in a blitz game!"

'At a training session in a sanatorium on the outskirts of Leningrad there were three of us: Tal, Karpov and I. And when they sat down to "play a position" at blitz, Tal would begin literally to gush forth with ideas. And I in astonishment would sit alongside and record them in a thick notebook...

'How did the preparations go for the battle with Fischer? Firstly, since there was a lengthy match in prospect, Karpov needed a very wide choice of openings: after all, over such a distance they would sooner or later be "breached". Therefore against 1 e4 we prepared, apart from 1...e5 and 1...c6, the Sicilian Defence – the Paulsen Variation and the Scheveningen. At that time in the Caro-Kann Anatoly preferred 4...♗f5, which was successfully tried in the match with Spassky. I was about to suggest "my" move 4...♘d7, but Tolya sceptically replied: 'Well, only as a last

resort." It is amusing that years later this variation became Karpov's main weapon for Black!

'Secondly, we shared Geller's opinion that Fischer played the opening very riskily, employing very sharp and sometimes strategically dubious variations. Therefore, strangely enough, the opening was his weakest, most vulnerable point. Not without reason did Lasker say: "In chess Black must first of all defend, otherwise the game turns into a farce." Since in double-edged variations the role of any preparation increases many-fold: here the outcome of a game can be decided literally by one move. And we endeavoured to devise as many such preparations as possible – underwater mines, especially for White.

'Thus, against the Najdorf Variation in the Sicilian Defence a deep study was made of the variations with 6 ♗g5 – both before the match with Polugayevsky and later, a weighty contribution was made by Geller and Tal. Against the Alekhine Defence, which Fischer played in his match with Spassky, Anatoly was armed "to the teeth" even earlier. When, at the finish of the Interzonal tournament, Korchnoi suggested to him that they should both agree draws, he was indignant: no way, "my" Torre plays the Alekhine Defence – this is a ready-made point!...

'In addition, before his match with Spassky I convinced Anatoly that he should "serve from both sides", and this produced an excellent effect. After all, in Reykjavik Fischer too had successfully played many openings (although here I agree with Bondarevsky – out of fear!). Why not operate in the same way against Fischer himself? I remember Furman complaining to me: "Some 'patzer' taught Tolya to play 1 e4, and now you and I are suffering as a result!" Furman and I played 1 d4, and for Karpov too this move was fully in keeping with his style. In short, we continued working on 1 d4. From Fischer one could mainly expect the King's Indian Defence, the Grünfeld and the Modern Benoni – very thorough preparations were made for these openings, and even training games were played.

'When it transpired that Fischer was not going to play, Furman shrugged his shoulders: 'All these openings for Black are no good – and he decided to give up.' Indeed, soon doubts were cast on much of Fischer's repertoire. It is a pity that this happened not in a direct encounter, which could have given a gigantic impetus to the development of opening theory. We thought that in such matches one should try and breach the opponent's defences in the main variations, by choosing the most critical lines. And this course, incidentally, prevailed in subsequent matches for the world championship, and later it was also taken up by Kasparov.

'This great amount of work helped Tolya subsequently: he began winning all the tournaments! As they say, the shell missed its target. But for Karpov's chess development it was bad that he did not play the match with Fischer. It was the misfortune of the great player: he quickly realised that, to defeat the rest, he did not need anything more – and he practically stopped working. In Baguio he largely relied on his old knowledge. And as a result, after losing his best years, he did not fully realise his creative potential. Fischer realised his completely, but Karpov nevertheless fell short.'

Bondarevsky could not come to these sessions, but he and Polugayevsky presented Karpov with detailed written descriptions of the American champion (these interesting studies were recently published in the book *Russians versus Fischer*). The reminiscences of Igor Zaitsev, published here for the first time, are also very interesting:

'At the very start of April 1975 I was suddenly (most probably, through the approach of Tigran Petrosian) invited to Novogorsk to a training session with Anatoly Karpov, for consultation on certain theoretical questions. Here, as I imagined, the preparations for the match with Fischer should have been at fever

pitch. But it was very much a holiday atmosphere that reigned at the training session. Karpov and Petrosian were keenly contesting a game of billiards, and Furman, bantering with them in turn, was phlegmatically watching the game. Within some forty minutes the battle on the green baize concluded and we went off for a substantial dinner. This training scenario was one that I was already well familiar with, from my long years of association with Petrosian. Both Karpov and Petrosian always preferred live chess contact to exhausting analysis. Roughly an hour and a half after dinner Anatoly and I finally went off to his room and sat down at a chessboard.

'Well, what could I show him in a hurry about the genius Fischer? I remember that I tried to interest him in a new defence, which at the end of the 1960s I had devised in the Spanish Exchange Variation: 1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗xc6 dxc6 5 0-0 ♘e7!? (after my publications in *64* it was successfully employed by Keres), but since in the main line 6 ♘xe5 ♕d4 7 ♕h5 g6 8 ♕g5 ♗g7 9 ♘d3 Black had to go in for unclear play a pawn down by 9...f5, it did not arouse any particular enthusiasm in Karpov. Some other interesting ideas, relating to the Spanish Open Variation, were received more favourably by him. However, he also did not want to devote much attention to them: after all, the probability that Fischer would suddenly prefer a specific variation of the Ruy Lopez to the Sicilian was ridiculously small. And Karpov, who by nature was purposeful and very organised, never wasted his time.

'During out first chess rendezvous he was constantly being called to the only telephone, which was on the ground floor of the building: it was at this time that the situation regarding the world championship was finally being settled – Fischer had not accepted the challenge. And it so happened that my theoretical reviews began with the challenger, and effectively concluded with the world champion.

'It is hard to say who would have won their match. I have heard several times from Karpov himself that in that year Fischer's chances were slightly better. But before the start of the Candidates matches Karpov had modestly said: "This is not my cycle." It seems to me that a new qualitative leap could well have been expected of him.

'In all his triumphal matches, from virtually the very first games Fischer was able, in some inexplicable way, to sow doubts in the hearts of his experienced opponents and gain a psychological advantage over them. Where the opponent was less compliant, like, for example, the uncompromising Reshevsky, the battle was far tougher. In the first half of his match with Fischer, Petrosian also looked like a worthy opponent. But as soon as Petrosian cracked and he lost his mental balance, Fischer became transformed and began playing with redoubled energy. As some professional psychologists assert, in an encounter between two individuals the aggregate measure of confidence is a constant: that which one loses is gained by the other.

'It is extremely improbable that such a psychological weakening could have occurred with Karpov. This is confirmed by the whole of his exceptionally stable career. True, that same career suggests that Fischer could have proved more durable, if the match had been excessively prolonged. Karpov would have had to pay very serious attention to his overall physical preparation. We must not forget that he was eight years younger than the champion and, according to the statistics of world championship matches, overall success is nevertheless on the side of the young.

'Comparing their chess virtues is even more difficult. In my opinion, by 1975 Karpov's positional intuition was stronger, but Fischer's combinative vision was wider in scope. Karpov was more tenacious in defence – Fischer was more resolute in attack. There was also a slight difference in how they converted an advantage: there, where Karpov acted more

methodically, Fischer would achieve his aim more energetically.

'Fischer would probably have had a more detailed impression of "his" set-ups, but since his opening repertoire was rather narrow, Karpov could have probed for vulnerable places in it, also by relying on the united support of the "home producers" of theory. To a narrow circle of acquaintances Petrosian said several times that the only reason why Fischer left chess was because almost all of his opening variations had already been refuted. This is possibly an exaggeration, but many weak points in Fischer's favourite lines were indeed already well marked.

'I will try to guess the specific nature of their opening confrontation. Fischer would have been unlikely to deviate from his customary 1 e4, since he would have seen that in the closed games Karpov adopted exceptionally solid and reliable set-ups. But how would Karpov have repelled 1 e4 ? Probably in an uncomfortably diverse way for his opponent, relying simultaneously on the Ruy Lopez, Petroff, Caro-Kann and even Sicilian. Karpov could handle the Ruy Lopez both traditionally, and by selecting one of the specific variations. He could have been helped by the fact that at that time, in order to avoid either the Marshall Attack or the Open Variation, Fischer often replied to 3...a6 with 4 ♗xc6.

'With White, in contrast to his opponent, Karpov could have alternated between 1 e4 and 1 d4 far more freely. 1 e4 would have usually led to variations of the Sicilian, while after 1 d4 Fischer could have been mainly expected to choose the King's Indian Defence. It would appear that over a long match Karpov's chances in the opening would have been, at the least, not worse.

'In the transition stage from opening to middlegame, in the solving of strategic problems I would give some preference to Fischer at that time, bearing in mind his greater knowledge and experience. However, I do not see on which scales it is possible to measure and compare such dissimilar factors, that Karpov was a young, rapidly developing and highly trained player, while Fischer, practising a strict self-denial tournament diet and concocting opening variations alone, was an exceptionally deep and subtle researcher.

'At any event, for me it is evident that they were opponents who were worthy of each other. Both of them hardly ever made serious mistakes, they lost extremely rarely and in the eyes of their contemporaries they appeared to be almost infallible players.'

In the previous volume I have already expressed my opinion about why Fischer refused to play Karpov. Now, when in general terms we are familiar with the work of the Karpov team, I should like to explain more clearly my vision of the situation that had arisen by that time in world chess.

In my view, when Furman and Petrosian explained Fischer's withdrawal by the fact that nearly all of his opening variations were already 'no good' or had been 'refuted', this was an obvious exaggeration – the maximalism typical of chess experts of the old school, accustomed to thinking in general categories. True, they hit on the correct explanation, but they expressed their idea inaccurately. It is hard to understand: which variations, strictly speaking, had been refuted? The very sharp 'Najdorf' is still holding out to this day, as are Fischer's defences to 1 d4. And is it possible in general to talk about the refutation of entire opening variations? Besides, by 1975 a number of new and quite attractive set-ups had appeared on the horizon (among them such incorrect, from the classical point of view, variations as the Chelyabinsk or the 'Hedgehog'), some of which Fischer could well have adopted.

Therefore it would have been more correct to talk not about the refutation of specific opening variations, but about the new approach to opening preparation in general. This was the crux of the problem! With his enor-

mous work in the early 1970s Fischer prepared a qualitative leap in the development of opening theory – he was the proclaimer of a genuine openings revolution, which began precisely in his 'golden' year 1972 and within a little more than ten years logically led the progress of chess thinking to my matches with Karpov.

To some, these post-Fischer years may seem rather uninteresting, but in chess there was a colossal amount of underground work going on. Fischer's departure and the politicisation of chess life somewhat diverted attention from the creative aspect, which prevented the role of this period in chess development from being properly appreciated (it is for this reason that I have covered Karpov's most important matches in such detail). Although, in fact, in opening theory truly revolutionary changes were taking place. This topic has proved so fascinating and immense, that have I decided to devote a separate volume to it, the next in the series.

So what in fact was Fischer's key problem? In my view it was that, always working alone, he was simply unable to adapt to the new demands of preparation, dictated by the opening revolution. The complexity of the resulting problems demanded other methods of working, another way of thinking and, which was especially important, the presence of critics. And, hypothetically comparing the pre-match preparations of Fischer and Karpov, one must mention not only the challenger's advantage in the number and quality of specific prepared variations, but also, in particular, his obvious superiority in the all-inclusive, wide-ranging extent of this preparation.

It is quite probable that Fischer, with his keen chess feeling, even before the Karpov-Spassky match clearly realised: a new era had arrived and he had to reject his customary methods of working. With his own eyes he saw the fruits of the revolution he had generated, and he was aware that it was no longer possible to prepare properly on his own. Invite some helpers? But he had always worked alone, not trusting his helpers even to analyse adjourned positions! He was aware that serious qualitative shifts had occurred, that he had left one kind of chess and would arrive at another, and that to join the new reality, a huge effort, an incredible spurt was required.

He realised that he would have to play against the leader of a generation who had grown up on the wave of the openings revolution and had brought these qualitative shifts to chess. Against a cold-blooded fighter, who would not only learn the lessons of his matches with Polugayevsky, Spassky and Korchnoi, and not only use the analyses of the leading Soviet grandmasters, but also display his unique ability to instantly absorb, digest, and successfully put into practice any sound strategic ideas.

Observing the qualifying cycle, he realised that Karpov would be especially strong in the first part of the marathon. And Bobby, in view of his psychological instability, most probably began to have serious fears about a bad start. However, these fears too largely rested on the quality of opening preparation. Fischer sensed that in an encounter with Karpov his preparation might not meet the demands of the moment. Torn apart by numerous complexes, he ended up in a vicious circle: afraid that you will be unable to prepare properly, because of this you become even more afraid...

In short, Fischer was not in fact able to change track, also for the reason that he had not played chess for too long. In the Botvinnik era it was possible not to play for three years and still retain the title of world champion, whereas in the times of the openings revolution three years was a whole eternity! In modern chess history, champions and challengers have managed to switch to a different era, but only through being active players. The most titanic work was done in the 1970s by Korchnoi, although Karpov's determined rebuilding in the mid-1980s (to be described later) was also impressive. I too, although not

to the same degree, had to rebuild my game after the defeat in my match with Kramnik...

But let us return to the spring of 1975: on 3rd April FIDE proclaimed Karpov the 12th world champion in the history of chess. And on 24th April in Moscow, in the Hall of Columns of the House of Unions, the coronation ceremony of the new chess king took place. In his speech Dr Euwe said, among other things:

'I admire Karpov's composure, his deep sense of respect and the competitive qualities which he has displayed throughout the time that this matter has lasted (since the match regulations were drawn up). Fischer had every opportunity to defend his title. Fischer's obstinacy, or some other features of his character which I, like many others, do not understand, prevented him from utilising his right, and from fulfilling his duty to the chess world. As regards Karpov, of this we are confident: he will be a worthy champion, and will on many occasions demonstrate his strength in various events.'

Euwe recalled, not without some pride, that the first of Karpov's three thousand moves on the path to the throne was made by him – at the Niemeijer Cup in Groningen (cf. p.209), and he concluded: 'So it was following my example that Anatoly Karpov became world champion!'

'I don't know about Fischer, but I consider the match that we didn't play to be an enormous loss,' Karpov was to say years later. 'It is not worth guessing how it would have concluded, but I don't doubt for an instant that it would have become the most significant event in my life... Of course, I was happy when Max Euwe crowned me with the laurel wreath of world champion. But in that wreath there were not the most important leaves, there was not the most valuable thing for me – memorable signs of a struggle with my brilliant predecessor.'

Active Champion

After gaining the title without a match, Karpov rushed into the crucible of tournament battles, driven by a desire to demonstrate that he did indeed have no equals in the world. He immediately outlined his credo at the coronation ceremony: 'It seems to me that one of the chief obligations of the world champion is to be an active player, so that people from various countries should see the champion at the chessboard, and that grandmasters and masters should be able to measure their strength against his, learn from him and teach him something. Therefore I firmly intend to take part systematically in home and international events.'

His 'debut' as champion came at the Vidmar Memorial (Portoroz/Ljubljana, June 1975): 1. Karpov – 11 out of 15 (+7=8); 2. Gligoric – 10; 3-5. Furman, Hort and Ribli – 9½; 6-7. Parma and Portisch – 8½; 8-9. Ljubojevic and Velimirovic – 8, etc. It is noteworthy that in his first-round game with Portisch he chose not his favourite move 1 e4, but 1 ♘f3 – and scored a good win in the Slav Defence (revenge for San Antonio!). From that time onwards 'serving from both sides', which had been successfully tested in his match with Spassky and prepared against Fischer, was regularly employed by Karpov, although before the matches with me he nevertheless had a clear leaning towards 1 e4.

Then came the USSR Team Championship (Riga, July 1975), where there was a very strong tournament on the top boards: Karpov, Spassky, Petrosian, Tal, Beliavsky... Anatoly confidently made the best score (+4=3), again defeating Spassky with the help of 1 d4 – this time it was a Queen's Indian Defence with the successful siege of an isolated d5-pawn.

The champion's next test was a super-tournament in Milan (August-September 1975), a city which had been in contention for the staging of the Fischer-Karpov match and had decided to replace it with another outstanding chess event. The competition was held under an unusual formula – in three

stages: first an all-play-all tournament of 12 grandmasters, then semi-final matches of four games between the players who had taken the first four places (1-4 and 2-3) and a final match of six games.

Karpov: 'Here I was simply obliged to be first! The tournament had a grandiose line-up – it was as though it had been devised to test the calibre of the new champion. The world still demanded proof of the legality of the "new regime". Milan would have to put the dot over the "i". First of all I had to finish in the first four... When it is a question of the need to be first, after playing 21 games in 25 days against very strong opponents, the creative aspect has to take second place.'

After winning three 'Spanish duels' in the first six rounds – with Black against Ljubojevic (deep into the endgame – in a drawn ending with opposite-coloured bishops) and with White against Unzicker and Gligoric, he took the lead. And he could have finished first, had he not lost in the 8th round with White against Andersson. It is symptomatic that Ulf beat Karpov – and before that also Portisch! – with his favourite 'hedgehog' system, which was then only just gathering speed (in the volume about the openings revolution, a whole chapter will be devoted to this flexible set-up). Karpov liked playing against the 'hedgehog' and he was thinking only about victory: 'Andersson regularly runs short of time, and I played specially so as to give him food for thought.' A complicated manoeuvring struggle developed, and Ulf did indeed end up in terrible time-trouble, but when he played ...d6-d5 and made a desperate exchange sacrifice, miracles began: Anatoly made a series of 'obvious' moves and... adjourned the game in a lost position.

However, he did not lose his place in the first four and after a bloodless semi-final with Petrosian (2-2, victory on the superior coefficient in the tournament) he won the final match against Portisch: 3½-2½. The outcome of the entire event was decided by Karpov's only win, and again with White in a Ruy Lopez – in the Steinitz Defence Deferred. More details of this difficult match are given in the chapter 'The Hungarian Botvinnik' (cf. *Volume 3, Game No.40*). Tal: 'Not long before the tournament Karpov was indisposed and he played in Italy without his usual verve. In my view, one of the most graphic manifestations of a player's class is his ability to perform successfully even when he is "off" his game. It was this that the champion demonstrated in Milan.'

In November Karpov gave some intensive simultaneous displays in a tournament of Pioneers Palaces, held in Leningrad (where, as has already been mentioned, we first met at the board). A couple of weeks later the 43rd USSR Championship was starting, and all the leading players in the country were due to take part: from 1973, after the loss of the crown, the Sports Committee rigorously endeavoured to follow this line. Of course, Karpov too was due to play there, but he had to withdraw on account of fatigue and his poor state of health, which was supported by an official medical report.

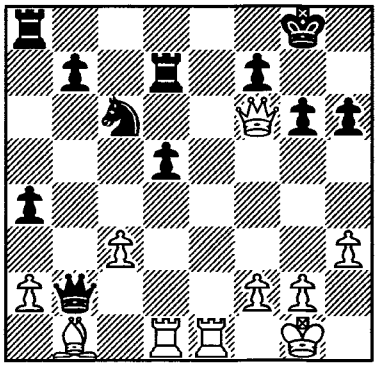
Unhappy about this news, the head of the chess section Baturinsky wrote a report to Ivonin, the deputy chairman of the Sports Committee: *'I would ask you to speak personally to A.E.Karpov, and if necessary to the medical officials, in view of the fact that the world champion's non-participation in the national championship, following the refusal of Korchnoi and Spassky for the second year running, will have unfavourable repercussions.'* But the Leningrad doctors managed to convince the sports directors... It was Petrosian who became national champion, half a point ahead of Vaganian, Gulko, Romanishin and Tal.

Thoroughly rested and restored, Karpov set off together with his long-standing friend and rival Rafael Vaganian to the highly prestigious 'Solidarity' tournament in Skopje (February-March 1976), where four years earlier he had made a brilliant debut at the Olympiad.

The pairings brought the rivals together in

the very first round, and again, as three years earlier in Budapest, Vaganian was unable to hold out in his favourite French Defence.

Game 68
A.Karpov-R.Vaganian
Skopje 1976, 1st round



23 ♗f5! (it was for the sake of this that White gave up his b2-pawn) **23...♖e7?**

In Karpov's opinion, '23...gxf5 would also have lost to 24 ♖d3 f4 25 ♕xf4 ♕c2 26 ♖g3+ ♔h7 27 ♕f6' (or 27 ♕g4), but '25...f6 was perhaps more tenacious.'

In the computer era it can be said with far more certainty: 23...gxf5! 24 ♖d3 f4 25 ♕xf4 f6! followed by ...♖g7 would have enabled Black to save the game: 26 ♖g3+ (26 ♖ee3 ♖g7! is weaker) 26...♖g7 27 ♕xf6 ♖xg3 28 fxg3 ♕b6+ 29 ♔h2 ♕c7, or 26 ♕xf6 ♖g7 27 ♕e6+ ♔h7 28 ♕f5+ ♔h8 with a draw.

24 ♖xe7 ♘xe7 25 ♗d3! ♘f5

A difficult choice: in the event of 25...♔f8 (25...♘c6? 26 ♗xg6, while if 25...♖e8? or 25...♕a3?, then 26 ♖e1 is decisive) 26 ♖b1 ♕d2! (but not Karpov's move 26...♕xa2?) 27 ♖xb7 ♕e1+ 28 ♔h2 ♕e6 29 ♕h8+ ♘g8 30 ♕d4 Black's position is also unenviable.

26 ♗xf5 gxf5 27 ♖e1 ♕xa2 28 ♕xh6!

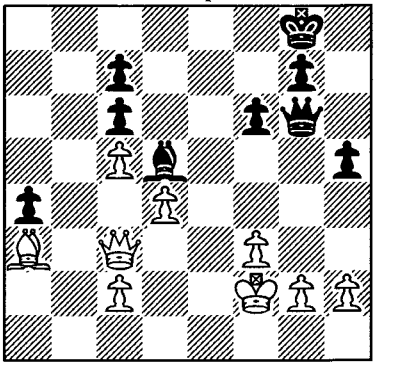
After 28 ♖e3 Black would have saved himself with the pretty 28...f4! 29 ♕xf4 ♕b1+ 30 ♔h2 a3! 31 ♖g3+ ♕g6 32 ♖xg6+ fxg6, 'and White has no more than perpetual check' (Karpov). For the same reason ♖e3 does not win on the 29th and 31st moves.

28...a3 29 ♕g5+ ♔f8 30 ♕f6 ♔g8 31 ♕xf5 ♕d2? (31...♔g7, intending ...d5-d4, was still not so clear) **32 ♖e7!**, and Black resigned on the 40th move.

After this defeat Rafael obviously felt disheartened, and was no longer in contention for the prize places. One can't help remembering Korchnoi's words: 'Vaganian is a chess player of enormous practical potential. But he is more of an artist than a fighter. And he needs inspiration, in order to demonstrate his class. And it, inspiration, is a capricious thing.'

But Karpov, although he expended a mass of energy on this first-round win, managed after a draw with Black against Adorjan (note the opening: 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 a6 5 ♗d3 ♕c7 6 0-0 g6 etc.) to win a further four games in a row! One of them reached an endgame with opposite-coloured bishops, far more refined than the one in his Milan game with Ljubojevic.

Game 69
B.Kurajica-A.Karpov
Skopje 1976, 5th round

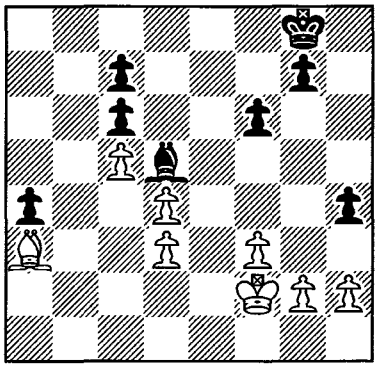


Black's advantage is largely of an academic nature. It is hard to imagine that anything real can be derived from it.

32 ♕d3

Kurajica offers the exchange of queens, believing that there are no dangers in this opposite-coloured bishop ending. 32 h4 (Karpov) 32...♕f5 33 ♕d3 was slightly more circumspect, but it is hard to criticise seriously the move made: White retained a draw for a long time in the endgame.

32...♕xd3 33 cxd3 h4!



Slightly pinning down White's kingside pawns and preparing a potential breakthrough. Without the creation of another weakness or another passed pawn, the ending with opposite-coloured bishops cannot be won!

34 g3 ♔f7 35 ♔e3 f5 36 ♔f4 ♔g6 37 ♔e3?!

Passive. The simplest way to draw was 37 gxh4, reducing the number of black pawns: 37...♔h5 38 ♔xf5 (38 ♔g3 will probably also do, but why make things unnecessarily complicated!) 38...♗xf3, and now, of course, not 39 ♗b2? ♗d5! 40 ♗c1 in view of 40...♔xh4 (Karpov considers only 40...♗f7? 41 ♗b2 ♔xh4 42 d5! with a draw) 41 ♔g6 ♔h3 42 ♔xg7 ♔xh2 43 ♔f6 ♔g3 44 ♔e7 ♔f3 45 ♔d7 ♔e2 46 ♔xc7 ♔xd3 when Black wins, but 39 ♔f4 ♗e2 40 ♔g3 with a drawn position.

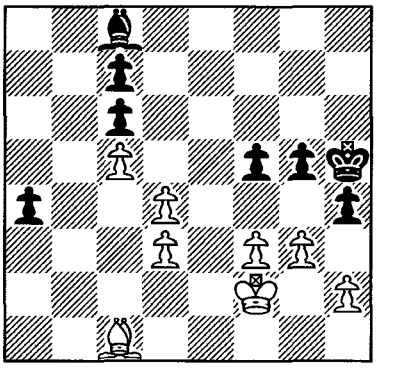
37 g4 too is sufficient for a draw, also denying the opponent the possibility of breaking through on the kingside. After 37...♗e6 38 ♗b2 fxg4 39 fxg4 ♗b3 40 g5 ♗c2 White gives up his d3-pawn and moves his bishop between the squares c1-b2-a3, while if ...♔f7, then ♔e5.

Of course, 37 ♔e3 also does not lose, but this is a 'moral' victory for Black: he seizes space on the kingside and White begins to have difficulties in defending.

37...♔h5 38 ♗b4 g5

'Here it is, the real threat of a breakthrough – 39...f4+ 40 gxf4 g4! 41 fxg4+ ♔xg4. White has to retreat his king, still not realising where the danger lies.' (Karpov)

39 ♔f2 ♗a2 40 ♗a3 ♗b1 41 ♔e2 ♗a2 42 ♗c1 ♗e6 43 ♔f2 ♗c8



44 d5?

'But this is nerves.' (Karpov). White does not simply give up a pawn, but, more importantly, he undoubles the c-pawns – and it is this factor that allows Black to win!

White should have continued defending passively – 44 ♔e2. After 44...♗a6 45 ♔e3 (45 ♗b2? hxg3 46 hxg3 f4 favours Black – Karpov) 45...f4+ 46 gxf4 g4 White saves himself by 47 f5 (Karpov) 47...g3 48 hxg3 hxg3 49 f6 ♔g6 50 f4, or 47 fxg4+ ♔xg4 48 ♔e4 ♗c8 49 ♔e5, and if 49...♔h3 50 f5 ♗xf5 51 ♔xf5 ♔xh2 he has 52 d5! cxd5 53 ♗f4+ ♔g2 54 ♗xc7, while after 49...♗f5 the immediate breakthrough is possible: 50 d5 cxd5 51 c6 ♗xd3 52 ♔xd5 ♔h3 53 f5! ♗xf5 54 ♗f4 with a draw.

Black's best chance is the immediate 44...f4! 45 gxf4 g4. White should wait: 46 ♔f2 ♗f5 47 ♗a3 ♗xd3 48 ♗c1 ♗c4 (the bishop goes to d5, to force the capture on g4) 49 ♗b2 ♗d5 50 fxg4+ ♔xg4 51 ♗c1 ♗b3 52 ♔g2 ♗c4 53 ♔f2 ♗d5. Now White has to part with a

pawn because of zugzwang: 54 f5 ♔xf5 55 ♔e3 ♔g4 56 ♔f2 ♔h3 57 ♔g1.

Roughly the same position arose later in the game, but...! Here Black's pawns are doubled, and this saves White: 57...♗f3 58 ♔f2 ♗h5 59 ♔g1 ♗d1 60 ♔h1 ♔g4 61 ♔g2 ♔f5 62 ♔h3 ♔e4 63 ♗b2 ♔d3 64 ♔xh4 ♔c2 65 ♗a1 a3 66 ♔g5 a2 67 ♔f6 ♔b1 68 ♗c3 a1♕ 69 ♗xa1 ♔xa1. Black has won the bishop, but the white king is just in time to pick up all of the enemy pawns: 70 ♔e7 ♔b2 71 ♔d7 ♗f3 72 h4 ♔c3 73 h5 ♔xd4 74 h6 ♗e4 75 h7 ♗xh7 76 ♔xc6.

44...cxd5 45 d4 f4! 46 gxf4

'White's position is hopeless after 46 g4+ ♔g6 followed by the king manoeuvre f7-e6-d7-c6-b5-c4 and the switching of the bishop to d3.' (Karpov). Whereas the white king is forced to defend the f3- and g4-pawns standing on light-coloured squares.

46...g4 47 ♔g2 ♗f5 48 ♔f2 gxf3 49 ♔xf3 ♗e4+ 50 ♔f2 ♔g4 51 ♗b2 ♔xf4 52 ♗c1+ ♔g4 53 ♗b2 c6 54 ♗c1 ♔h3 55 ♔g1 ♗g6 56 ♔h1 (there is nothing else) **56...♗h5**

Of course, not 56...♔g4? 57 ♔g2 ♔f5 58 ♔f3 ♗h5+ 59 ♔e3 with a draw. 'At all costs the white king must be deprived of the f3-square.' (Karpov)

57 ♔g1 ♗d1! 0-1

White resigned in view of 58 ♗b2 ♔g4 59 ♔g2 ♗f3+! 60 ♔f2 ♔f4 (Karpov), or 58 ♔h1 ♔g4 59 ♔g2 ♔f5 60 ♔h3 (60 ♔f2 ♔e4) 60...♔e4, and there is again a race, but here after 61 ♗b2 ♔d3 62 ♔xh4 ♔c2 63 ♗a1 ♔b1 64 ♗c3 a3 65 ♔g5 a2 66 ♔f6 a1♕ 67 ♗xa1 ♔xa1 68 ♔e6 ♔b2 69 ♔d6 ♔c3 70 ♔xc6 ♔xd4 Black has a decisive tempo.

'Even the seemingly most simple positions contain many secrets, and you should play equally carefully in positions with many pieces and castling on opposite sides, as in endings with opposite-coloured bishops and an equal number of pawns. Alas, often it is sufficient to make just one mistake, not even a blunder, to perhaps lose an otherwise well conducted game,' Karpov summarises. 22 years later another subtle ending with opposite-coloured bishops occurred in one of his games (*Game No.107*).

In the 7th round the only ever Reshevsky-Karpov game took place: **1 ♘f3 c5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 g3 g6 4 ♗g2 ♗g7 5 0-0 0-0 6 d4 cxd4 7 ♘xd4 ♘c6 8 ♘c3 ♘xd4 9 ♕xd4 d6 10 ♕d3 a6 11 ♗d2 ♖b8 12 ♖ac1 ½-½**. It is incredible, but true: during his dizzy career the 64-year-old giant of American chess played against eleven world champions! In Skopje Reshevsky made a modest score, suffering from all his usual problems.

Karpov: 'His devoutness and punctuality in observing the rites of his faith are well known throughout the chess world. His religion prevents him from playing on Friday evenings. Therefore all the participants agreed to switch their games with Reshevsky on that day of the week to the morning, so that they would finish before sunset. On the first Friday Reshevsky was due to meet Vaganian, who regarded the prospect of a morning session with excessive calm, even complete disdain. I was concerned: "Find out the exact starting time." Vaganian returned looking discouraged: "They say early – at ten." "On no account. You're accustomed to getting up late. Don't even think of agreeing to earlier than noon. Eleven is the very earliest: if your mild character can't stand it and you start giving way." And we set off together to the organisers. Reshevsky argued, and threatened to leave Skopje, but all the other players supported us. This game, which began at eleven, was conducted brilliantly by Vaganian, and he promptly rushed to the hotel to thank me...'

It seems to me that this episode reveals Karpov's tough, uncompromising character and partly explains why some brilliant talents become champions, and others do not. Here it should also be explained that Anatoly, like many leading grandmasters, is by nature a 'night-owl', and for him it was always important for play to begin as late as possible.

The last intrigue of the tournament in Skopje was the finishing encounter between the leaders, Uhlmann and Karpov. The German grandmaster was half a point behind and, it appeared, was bound to try his luck. However, he did not achieve anything from the opening (cf. *Volume 3, Game No.71*, note to Black's 7th move) and, dissatisfied with his position, offered a draw. But Karpov again displayed his character: he turned down the peace offer and coldly converted his advantage into a win.

The final result was truly champion-like: 1. Karpov – 12½ out of 15 (+10=5); 2. Uhlmann – 11; 3. Timman – 10½; 4-5. Kurajica and Tarjan – 9; 6. Velimirovic – 8½; 7. Adorjan – 8; 8-9. Ivkov and Matanovic – 7½; 10. Vaganian – 7, etc. After the tournament Karpov proudly stated that in percentage terms he had surpassed Fischer's result in Skopje 1967 (13½ out of 17). And to the question 'Who do you consider to be your most dangerous rival?' without beating about the bush he replied: 'I don't see anyone at the moment...'

Apparently inspired by Karpov's successes, in March 1976 the Sports Committee adopted an impressive resolution: 'On the preparation of Soviet chess players for the world championship events 1976-78.' In the preamble it was stated:

'By fulfilling the Committee's directives No.117 of 7 February 1973 and No.48 of 29 May 1974, Soviet chess players have achieved significant successes in international competitions and consolidated their leading position in the chess world. At the present time they hold all the officially contested championship titles in the world and in Europe. Grandmaster A.Karpov, after being proclaimed world champion, has performed in national and foreign competitions, and has achieved fine results and general recognition as the No.1 player in the world.'

This resolution approved a three-year 'Preparation plan for members of the USSR teams for world championship competitions of 1976-78.' I don't know to what extent it was fulfilled, but I should like to acquaint you with extracts from this once secret document – a monument to an entire era:

'Each member of the USSR team should every year play an average of 80 games in six competitions. The control event for each grandmaster, determining his playing load in the following year, is the USSR individual championship.

The training load of a member of the USSR teams is to consist every year of four sessions, of duration totalling 70 days, and four periods of individual work, of duration totalling 70 days.

Every year in January a 24-day training session of the strongest USSR players is to be held at the Sports Committee's Olympic Base in Novogorsk. During the year training sessions lasting 12-18 days are to be held at Sports Committee bases before official FIDE events and before major international tournaments.

Each member of the USSR team is obliged to keep a diary of preparations and performances. The diary is the main report document, reflecting the quality of the player's preparation and play.

A player's state of health and general physical preparation are to be constantly monitored by the USSR chess teams' doctor. Psychological preparation is to be carried out at training and medical sessions by specialist consultants and monitored by the USSR chess teams' doctor.

Schedule for ensuring that members of the USSR teams and trainers have up-to-date chess information:

1. Study of the games of the leading foreign grandmasters (Mecking, Ljubojevic, Andersson, Hübner, Smejkal, Portisch, Hort, Larsen, Browne, Kavalek) with a critical analysis, summary of opening repertoire and recommendations.

2. Study of topical problems and writing of confidential reports 'Opening reviews for 1975 (1976, 1977)'. Completion dates – the entire period 1976-78. To be carried out by leading chess theoreticians (grandmasters and masters). Size of each work: 25-30 typed pages. Financing – by contract labour at the rate: annually 6 reports x 250 roubles = 1500 roubles.

3. Copying of material from foreign chess periodicals. Financing – annually 20,000 pages x 2½ kopecks = 500 roubles.

4. Preparation of punched cards with chess informa-

tion for use with the Central Chess Club punched card index. Financing – by contract labour at the rate: annually 15,000 cards x 20 kopecks (average cost, established in 1974 during A.Karpov's preparations for match with R.Fischer) = 3000 roubles.

Annual cost of this work approximately 5000 (five thousand) roubles.

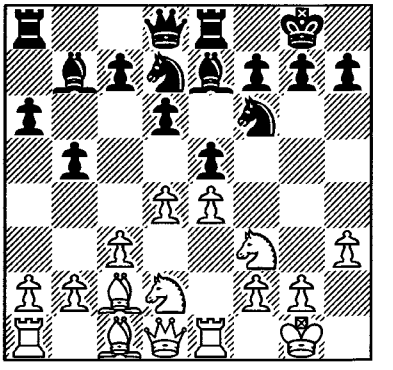
In the meantime chess life took its normal course. After the major tournament in Skopje the world champion played in three successive events, each of just six games: in April – the USSR Team Cup in Tbilisi (+2=4), and in May – a double-round tournament of four players in Amsterdam (+2=4). Karpov: 'The conclusion of this tournament coincided with my 25th birthday, and when the 75-year-old professor Euwe and I appeared on television, the Dutch joked that it was the broadcast of the century.'

In July – a similar four-player tournament in Manila (+1–1=4). In the 2nd round the champion lost unexpectedly with White to the idol of Filipino chess fans Eugenio Torre – of course, not in an Alekhine Defence, but in a double-edged variation of the Sicilian: 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘c6 6 ♗g5 e6 7 ♕d2 a6 8 0-0-0 ♗d7 9 f4 b5. 'And even an excellent win over Ljubojevic could not save me from 2nd place in the event,' Karpov laments. 'The distance was too short, and besides the "local hero", my main rival continued to play exceptionally successfully.'

Game 70
L.Ljubojevic-A.Karpov
Manila 1976, 3rd round
Ruy Lopez C95

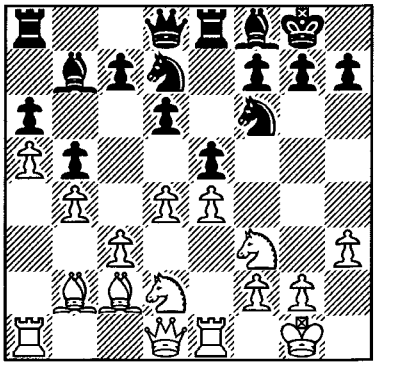
1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘b8 10 d4 (10 d3 – *Game No.51*) **10...♘bd7 11 ♘bd2 ♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8**

Karpov had a brilliant feeling for the subtleties of piece deployments in the Breyer Variation, and he played it for both sides with identical success. Out of 34 games begun with this variation, he won 12 and did not lose a single one! And in general he greatly respected the 'queen of openings', remembering Capablanca's precept: the Ruy Lopez is the touchstone of understanding positional play.



I, also from childhood, remembered the opinion of another luminary – Keres, who thought that the development of a young player was inconceivable without a knowledge and, above all, an understanding of the subtleties of the Ruy Lopez, and that a knowledge of this opening was necessary for every strong player.

13 b4 (ten years later in Tilburg, Ljubojevic was to play more modestly against Karpov – 13 b3; for 13 a4 – cf. *Game No.102*) **13...♗f8 14 a4 ♘b6 15 a5 ♘bd7 16 ♗b2**



16...♖b8! (in his match with Fischer, Spassky played 16...♕b8?! – *Volume 4, Game No.104*) **17 ♕b1**

In the notes to the aforementioned game the continuation 17 ♖b1 ♗a8 is also examined – Karpov defeated Browne in this fashion two months later (Amsterdam 1976).

17...♘h5!

The removal of the queen from d1 has made this manoeuvre possible, with the intention of establishing the knight on the important f4-square and, in addition, facilitating ...c7-c5. The immediate 17...c5?! is dangerous on account of 18 bxc5 dxc5 19 dxe5 ♘xe5 20 ♘xe5 ♖xe5 21 c4 (Karpov) 21...♖e6 22 ♖d1 ♘d7 23 e5 g6 24 ♗e4.

18 c4?

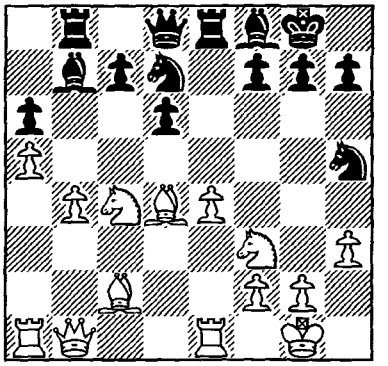
A faulty decision. The c3-pawn is the support of White's pawn chain, and its premature advance weakens his strong position in the centre and in addition has a veiled defect – the opposition of the white queen and the rook at b8. 18 ♘f1 is correct, when in the event of 18...♘f4 19 ♗c1 ♕f6 20 ♘1h2 White could have neutralised the appearance of the black knight at f4. But Karpov was intending 18...c5!?

18...bxc4 19 ♘xc4 exd4!

An important step in the activation plan. Now the black rooks come into play.

20 ♗xd4

20 ♘xd4 would have allowed Black to develop an initiative on the kingside: 20...♘e5! 21 ♘e3 (not 21 ♗b3 ♘f4! or 21 ♘d2 ♗c8! Karpov) 21...♕g5.

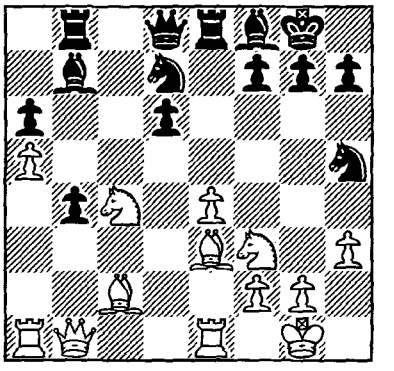


20...c5! 21 ♗e3

After 21 bxc5 ♗xe4! White would have remained a pawn down: 22 ♕d1 ♘xc5 23 ♗xc5 ♗xc2 24 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 25 ♕xc2 dxc5.

21...cxb4?

The immediate return of the knight by 21...♘hf6! was significantly stronger. White would have lost a pawn without any noticeable compensation, since the complications after 22 ♗f4 ♕c7 23 ♕d1 (23 ♘cd2 ♗c6) 23...cxb4 24 ♘d6 ♖e6 25 ♘xf7 ♕xf4 26 ♘3g5 ♘c5 27 g3 ♕c7 28 ♗b3 ♕e7 conclude to Black's advantage.



22 ♘b6?

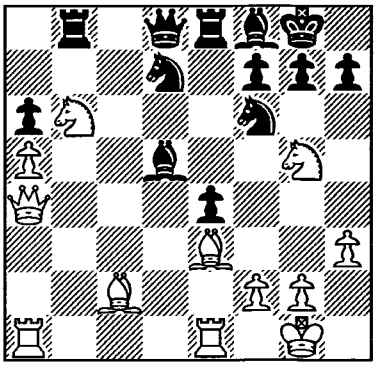
White misses his chance. The interposing of 22 ♗a7! ♖a8 23 ♗d4 would have dislodged the rook from the b-file and enabled him to maintain the dynamic balance, for example: 23...♘hf6 24 ♘cd2 ♖b8 25 ♗a4! ♖e6 26 ♗a7 ♖a8 27 ♗d4, and if 27...♘c5 – 28 ♗c2. Ljubojevic blocks the b-file in a primitive way, but now things become 'hot' for the e4-pawn.

22...♘hf6! 23 ♕xb4 d5 24 ♕b3 dxe4 25 ♘g5 ♗d5?

Another obvious, but unfortunate decision, which again changes the evaluation of the position. 25...♕e7! would have emphasised the unfortunate position of the knight at g5 and forced White to adopt extreme measures to liberate it. After 26 f3 exf3 (26...♘c5 27 ♕c3 exf3 28 ♗d4 ♘fe4 29 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 30 ♕xf3 ♕b4 is also not bad) 27 ♗f2 ♘e5 28 gxf3 h6 29 f4 fxg5 30 fxe5 ♘h5 White would have been left with a broken and cheerless position.

26 ♕a4?

Fatal. The queen sacrifice 26 ♘xd5! ♖xb3 27 ♗xb3 ♘xd5 28 ♗xd5 ♘e5 29 ♖ed1 would have allowed White to count on a draw.



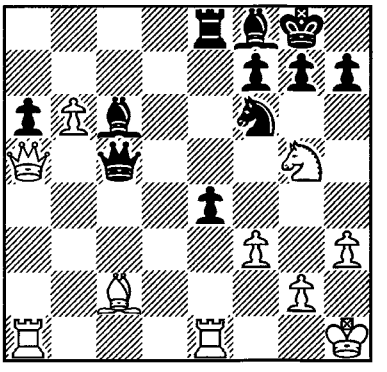
26...♘xb6! (the start of the final stage, which is accurately calculated by Karpov) **27 ♗xb6** (27 axb6? h6) **27...♕e7!**

The opposition of the queen at b1 and rook at b8 has caused White a mass of problems, whereas there is no way of exploiting the opposition of the queen at e7 and rook at e1.

28 f3 ♖xb6! 29 axb6 ♕c5+ 30 ♔h1

After 30 ♔h2 the most flamboyant way of deciding matters was 30...♗c6 31 ♕a5 ♕f2! 32 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 33 ♖xe4 ♗d6+ 34 ♔h1 ♕g3 35 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 36 ♔g1 ♕h2+ 37 ♔f2 ♗g3+ 38 ♔e3 ♕xg2 with an irresistible attack.

30...♗c6! (now loss of material is unavoidable) **31 ♕a5**



31...exf3!

Not weakening the attack. Going into the endgame by 31...♕xa5 32 ♖xa5 ♗b4 would have left White with saving hopes after 33 ♖ea1 or 33 ♗b3.

32 ♘xf3

32 ♕xc5 was impossible because of the simple 32...♖xe1+ 33 ♖xe1 (33 ♕g1 fxg2+ 34 ♔h2 ♗d6 mate) 33...fxg2+ 34 ♔h2 ♗xc5 (Karpov).

32...♕xc2 33 ♕xa6 ♗xf3 34 gxf3 ♖xe1+ 35 ♖xe1 ♘h5!

Accuracy to the end! After the immediate 35...♕f2 there would have followed 36 ♖f1 ♕g3 37 ♕c8! ♘d5 38 b7 ♘e3 39 ♖g1 ♕xf3 40 ♔h2 ♕f2 41 ♔h1, 'when Black has only a draw' (Karpov).

36 ♖e8 (36 ♖g1 ♕c6! 37 ♔g2 ♗d6) **36...♕f2**

This concludes the game, since Black's king hides from the checks at h6, and White's perishes.

37 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 38 ♕a3+ ♔e8 39 ♕a4+ ♔e7 40 ♕b4+ ♔f6 41 ♕d6+ ♔g5 42 ♕e5+ ♔h6 0-1

This was indeed a brilliant win by the world champion over one of the strongest foreign players at that time. Karpov won numerous games thanks to his superiority in understanding of position, but here he also 'outcalculated' an opponent who was famed for his calculating ability.

The tournament in Manila is memorable not only for this game. Karpov: 'A friend of Fischer – the Filipino Florencio Campomanes, FIDE Vice-President, had long been wanting to arrange a meeting between us. When I arrived in Manila, Campo confidentially informed me that Fischer would also be coming. But the tournament ended, and there was still no Fischer... On the way to the airport it transpired that Campomanes wanted to accompany me to Tokyo. It was then that I realised that he had somehow agreed to meet Fischer in Japan.'

On 11th and 12th August the champions met for a second time – on this occasion in

Cordoba in Spain, not far from where, in Montilla, Karpov had won a comparatively minor tournament (+5=4). These discussions are described in more detail in Volume 4. 'Botvinnik, whom Karpov informed by telephone about his meetings with Fischer, was doubtful: "But are you sure it was really him that you talked with, and not his double?" Yes, this appearance of the former champion came as a complete surprise for everyone.' (Roshal)

But the end of the year was approaching, and with it the most severe examination for the world champion – more severe than many international tournaments: the 44th USSR Championship (Moscow, November-December 1976). Karpov was again suffering from a cold, and in addition his parents were seriously ill, but there was no way that he could withdraw. His appearance was awaited with enormous interest. In its way this was a unique occurrence: earlier, of the Soviet world champions, in the years when they were champion, only Botvinnik had played in the USSR Championship – in 1951, 1952 and 1955 (and only once, in 1952, did he finish first, after a play-off match with Taimanov).

Tal: 'For the first time in the history of Soviet chess, the title of world champion had been gained before winning the gold medal of champion of the country, but perhaps more important was the fact that it was a long time since chess players had seen Karpov in real "action". He had gained several victories in international tournaments, but these events did not provoke any particular resonance. At the start of the championship Karpov looked out of training. A couple of draws, and a severe defeat against Geller – all this appeared to herald a sensation...'

Indeed, it was not easy for Karpov to endure the loss to Geller (*Volume 2, Game No.102*) and the ovation in the hall in honour of his opponent. The sports authorities were also seriously concerned...

True, in the 4th round the champion was 'helped' by Balashov, who for a long time in their game did not succumb to the 'Spanish torture', but sealed at the adjournment an indifferent move, and at the very start of the resumption (on the 43rd move!) suddenly placed his queen en prise and promptly resigned. Although, in general, this tournament was probably the best in Balashov's career: this was his only loss and in the second half of the event only he tried to maintain the tempo set by Karpov.

By also defeating Kupreichik with White, and drawing with Black against Petrosian ('a study-like save in a very difficult rook ending') and Romanishin, the world champion somewhat improved his standing. After seven rounds the position in the leading group was this: Balashov – 5; Dorfman and Rashkovsky – 4½; Geller, Karpov, Petrosian, Polugayevsky and Tal – 4. From this it is evident how competitively important was the 8th round clash between Karpov and Iosif Dorfman (who, incidentally, also played excellently in the next USSR Championship, sharing 1st-2nd places).

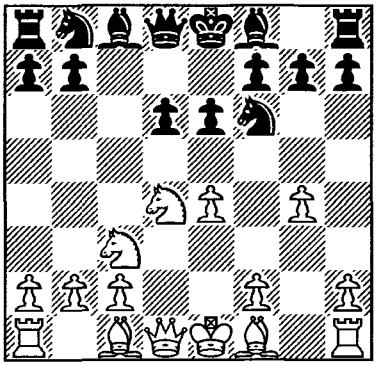
Tal: 'This game completely gripped not only the entire auditorium. I was playing on a neighbouring board, and from time to time it occurred to me that the position in it interested me more than my own game. I think that many of the players experienced the same feeling: the table at which this battle was taking place was constantly surrounded by a tight circle.' Yes, there were times when even the pragmatic Karpov would himself impose an ultra-sharp struggle on his opponents and in so doing act resourcefully and confidently! Dorfman accepted the challenge, and the result was a very interesting and unusually complicated chess spectacle.

Game 71

A.Karpov-I.Dorfman

44th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1976, 8th round
Sicilian Defence B81

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 g4

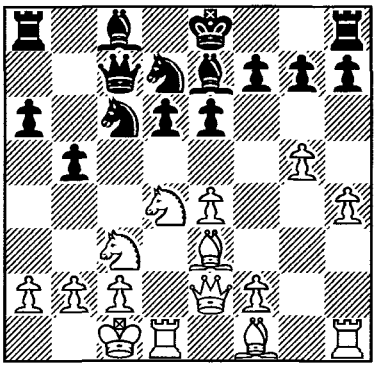


'In those instances when victory is absolutely essential, I revert to this sharp variation devised by the unforgettable Paul Petrovich Keres. And I was in fact meeting one of the tournament leaders.' (Karpov)

6...♗e7 (6...♘c6 – *Game No.50*; 6...h6 – *Game Nos.83 and 89*) **7 g5 ♘fd7 8 h4 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 a6 10 ♕e2**

A move which creates the grounds for the sharp thrusts ♘f5 or ♘d5. But, as was mentioned in the notes to the game with Hort, 10 ♕h5!? is more unpleasant for Black.

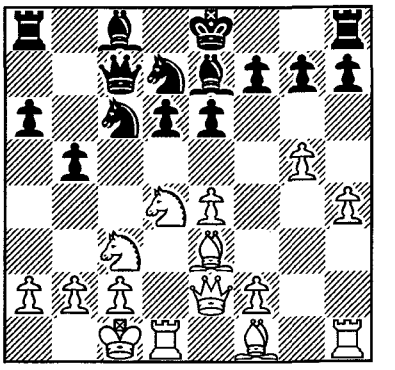
10...♕c7?!



This development of the queen to its usual Sicilian position is not always the best decision. Here, on the contrary, it hinders the most rapid development of Black's counterattack. 10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 0-0 12 0-0-0 b5 was necessary, leaving the c-file for the rook, and allowing the queen the possibility of going to a5.

11 0-0-0 b5

'Black provokes his opponent into making a sacrifice, apparently not fearing its consequences.' (Karpov)



12 ♘xc6!

After a long think Karpov decided against the immediate knight sacrifice 12 ♘f5, since 'the *zwischenzug* 12...b4! leads to immense complications – 13 ♘d5 exd5 14 exd5 ♘de5!'. A thorough analysis (naturally, with the help of a computer) has shown that 15 ♘xg7+ ♔f8 16 ♘e6+! fxe6 17 dxc6 promises White excellent prospects in this chaos, for example: 17...♕xc6 18 f4 b3! 19 axb3 ♕xh1 20 fxe5 d5 21 ♕f2+ ♔e8! 22 ♗g2 (the crafty nature of 18...b3 is revealed – the opening of the a-file cancels out the bishop check: 22 ♗b5+?? axb5 23 ♖xh1 ♖a1+) 22...♕h2 23 ♖h1 ♕xe5 24 ♗d4 ♗xg5+ 25 hxg5 ♕xg5+ 26 ♔b1 ♖f8 27 ♕e2 and, despite Black's material advantage, it is hard for him to defend.

Karpov considered the natural capture 12...exf5 to be bad because of 13 ♘d5 ♕d8 14 exf5. However, the consequences of 13...♕a5! 14 exf5 0-0! are not at all obvious: 15 f6 ♗d8 16 fxg7 ♖e8 17 ♕h5 ♘ce5.

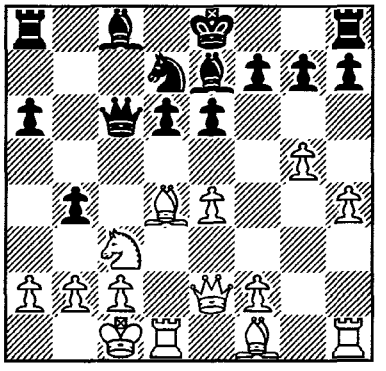
One has to give Karpov's wonderful intuition its due; it sometimes forced him to run counter to his own calculation of variations – and in so doing to avoid barriers that were invisible even to him! On this occasion too Karpov's sense of danger did not let him down: his choice of the moment for the

knight sacrifice proved correct.

12...♕xc6 13 ♗d4! b4?

Dorfman practically forces his opponent to sacrifice a piece, hoping that Karpov will be uncomfortable in the resulting positions with a disrupted material balance

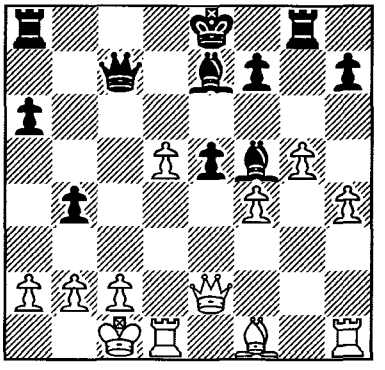
The two players considered the banal 13...0-0 to be too risky. Karpov writes: 'After castling, Black would immediately have come under a pawn attack.' But, in allowing the Keres Attack, Black should not be afraid of a pawn offensive on the kingside!



14 ♘d5! exd5 15 ♗xg7

The alternative attacking plan 15 exd5? ♕xd5 16 ♗xg7 ♕xh1 17 ♖e1 ♘e5 18 ♗xe5 dxe5 19 ♕xe5 would have been refuted by the simple 19...0-0!

15...♖g8 16 exd5 ♕c7 17 ♗f6 ♘e5 18 ♗xe5 dxe5 19 f4 ♗f5



20 ♗h3?!

By exchanging the bishop at f5, White effectively kills the planned counterplay on the c-file. Even when attacking, Karpov endeavours to restrict the opponent's activity! But such prophylactic thinking, when mounting an offensive which demands determined measures, does not always prove effective.

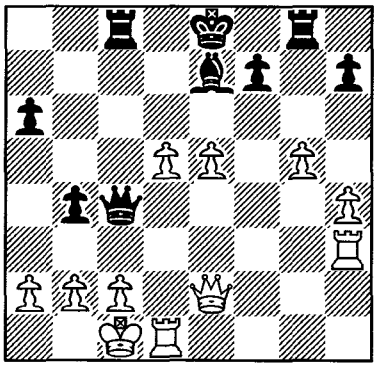
White would have gained an obvious advantage by the immediate 20 fxe5! ♖c8 21 ♖h2!, when the black queen cannot go to c4. However, Karpov did not like the fact that his opponent would gain counterplay after 21...♕a5 22 ♕f3 b3! 23 ♕xb3 (23 ♕xf5? even loses: 23...bxa2! 24 ♕xc8+ ♗d8 25 ♕c6+ ♔f8) 23...♖g6. Here Karpov wrongly cuts short his analysis – after 24 ♕f3! ♗d7 25 ♖f2 ♖g7 26 e6! Black loses quickly.

20...♗xh3 21 ♖xh3 ♖c8 22 fxe5

Again as an alternative Karpov suggests the prophylactic move 22 b3, depriving Black of the c4-square, on which he based his almost saving counterplay. He speaks of an advantage for White after 22...e4 23 ♕xe4 ♔f8, but this advantage is not secured either by his suggested 24 f5 ♗d6 25 f6 on account of 25...♕d7 26 ♖f3 ♖g6, or by 24 ♕xh7 ♕xf4+ 25 ♔b1 ♕d6 26 ♕f5 ♖c7.

22...♕c4!

After ending up in a desperate position, Dorfman finds an excellent regrouping.



23 ♖dd3?!

This natural move was passed over by the commentators, although in many variations it

is the weakening of White's back rank that prevents him from victoriously concluding his attack. Karpov again adheres to the strategy of restricting the opponent's possibilities and wants to retain the h4 and g5 pawn pair, which ties down Black's forces.

The sacrifice of these pawns looks more frightening – 23 ♖hd3! ♕xh4 (the regrouping carried out in the game – 23...♕f4+? 24 ♔b1 ♖c4, loses quickly here: 25 e6 ♖e4 26 exf7+ ♔xf7 27 ♕h5+ ♔g7 28 ♖f3) 24 d6 ♗xg5+ 25 ♔b1 ♖d8 26 e6, but the cool-headed 26...♖g6! enables Black to stay afloat: 27 e7 ♗xe7 28 dxe7 ♖xd3 29 ♕xd3 ♕xe7 30 ♕d4 ♖f6.

However, genuinely fearful experiences await Black after the prophylactic 24 ♔b1! The following illustrative variation concludes with the transition into an endgame, where Black can count on a draw: 24...♖c4 25 d6 ♖e4 26 ♖e3! ♖xe3 27 ♕xe3 ♗xg5 28 ♕a7 ♗d8 29 e6! fxe6 30 ♖f1 ♗f6 31 d7+ ♔e7 32 d8♕+ ♔xd8 33 ♕a8+ ♔e7 34 ♕xg8 ♕d4! 35 ♕xh7+ ♗g7 36 c3 bxc3 37 ♕c2! ♕b6 38 b3 ♕e3. But it is not at all obvious that Black would have been able to negotiate all these mined squares with such small losses.

23...♕f4+! 24 ♔b1 ♖c4! 25 d6

The direct 25 e6 succeeds brilliantly after 25...fxe6? 26 d6 ♖e4 27 ♕h5+ ♕f7 28 ♕d1 ♗f8 29 ♕h1! ♕b7 30 ♔c1! ♖g7 31 d7+! ♖xd7 32 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 33 ♖e3, but the centralising 25...♖e4! again saves Black. For example: 26 exf7+ ♕xf7 27 ♖he3 ♖xe3 28 ♖xe3 ♖g6, while the immediate 26 ♖he3 runs into the spectacular 26...♖xg5!! 27 hxg5 ♗xg5.

25...♖e4! 26 ♖he3 ♖xe3

Here 26...♖xg5? 27 hxg5 ♗xg5 28 d7+ ♔d8 no longer works on account of the spectacular counter-sacrifice 29 ♖d1! ♕xe3 30 ♕xa6! ♕c5 31 ♕b7, or even the prosaic 29 ♕g2! ♖xe3 30 ♕a8+ with mate.

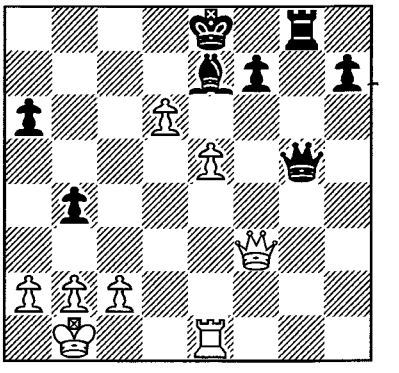
27 ♖xe3 ♕xh4 28 ♕f3 ♕xg5

The other pawn captures are equally bad: 28...♖xg5? 29 ♕c6+ ♔f8 30 dxe7+ ♔xe7 31 a3!, or 28...♗xg5? 29 e6 fxe6 30 ♖xe6+ ♔d8 31 ♕c6! And only the retreat 28...♗d8!, calculated without difficulty by the computer and not mentioned by any of the commentators, leaves Black with chances of a successful defence.

The computer goes on to produce some amazing variations, in which the black king feels secure in the middle of the board and which a human player would examine seriously only in analysis: 29 e6 fxe6 30 ♖xe6+ ♔d7 31 ♕f5 (or 31 ♖e3 ♔xd6 32 ♕b7 ♕c4! 33 ♖d3+ ♔e5 34 b3 ♕c5 35 ♕b8+ ♔f5 36 ♖xd8 ♕g1+ 37 ♔b2 ♕c5!! with a draw) 31...♕xg5 32 ♖e7+ ♔c6 33 ♕c8+ ♔b5 34 ♖b7+ ♗b6 35 a4+ bxa3 36 ♕d7+ ♔c5 37 b4+ ♔d4! 38 ♕xh7 ♗d8 39 ♕d3+ ♔e5. If all this is correct, it must be acknowledged that the far from obvious inaccuracies, committed by Karpov on moves 20 and 23, lost White the greater part of his advantage, leaving him only with the initiative.

29 ♖e1

'White would have retained a certain advantage after 29 ♕c6+ ♔f8 30 dxe7+ ♕xe7 31 ♕h6+ ♖g7 32 b3, but I wanted more, and so I "restricted" myself to a quiet – but in fact risky – move.' (Karpov). The immediate regaining of the piece was objectively the best continuation, but with time-trouble approaching the champion continues to build up the pressure.



29...♕g2?!

Up till now Dorfman has succeeded in parrying the onslaught, but here he loses the thread of the game. 29...♕g4 30 ♕c6+ ♕d7,

as suggested by Karpov, after 31 ♕e4! ♗d8 32 ♕xh7 would still have obliged Black to defend accurately for a long time – for example, 32...♖f8 33 ♖g1 a5 34 ♖g8 ♗e7 35 ♖g7 ♗d8, but the final outcome of the battle would have remained unclear.

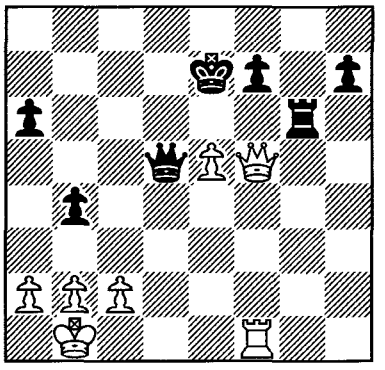
30 ♕f5! (Black obviously overlooked this move) **30...♖g6?**

Premature panic. Now White regains the piece in a highly favourable version. By continuing the pursuit of the white queen: 30...♕g4! 31 ♕xh7 ♕g6! (White's threats can hardly be parried after 31...♗h4 32 ♖f1 ♖g7 33 ♕d3 ♕c8 34 ♖d1), Black would have created the greatest difficulties for his opponent, for example: 32 ♕h3 ♕g4 33 ♕d3 ♗h4 34 ♖f1 ♕e6 – Black remains a piece up, not allowing a definite evaluation of the position to be made.

31 ♖f1

From this moment all White's moves, speaking in modern language, tally with the 'first line of the computer'.

31...♕d5 32 dxe7 ♔xe7

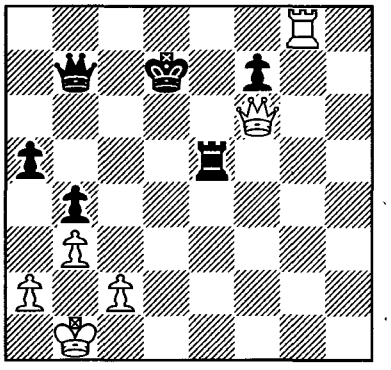


33 ♕f4! a5 34 ♕h4+ ♔e8 35 ♕xh7 ♕f3 36 ♕h8+ ♔e7 37 ♕h4+ ♔e8 38 ♕c4 ♕b7 39 b3

White has succeeded in making an escape square, without lessening the tempo of the attack. Black now has nothing to hope for.

39...♖e6 40 ♖g1 ♖xe5 41 ♖g8+ ♔e7 42 ♕h4+ ♔d7 43 ♕f6!

The final subtlety, worked out during analysis of the adjourned position. White forces the rook to retreat, abandoning the a5-pawn to its fate.



43...♖e7 44 ♕f5+ ♔d6 45 ♕xa5

'It's all very well checking, but a pawn is a pawn...' the winner philosophically comments.

45...♖e5

In reply to 45...♕e4 46 ♕b6+ ♔e5 47 ♕c5+ Karpov gives a variation that is almost 20 moves long, consisting, in his opinion, of the strongest moves for both sides. But, as is well known, any long variation inevitably contains a mistake. That is the case here: '47...♔f4 48 ♖b8...' Here 48 ♕g5+ ♔f3 49 ♕g2+ ♔e3 50 ♖g3+ is immediately decisive, but instead of the suicidal 47...♔f4 Black can prolong the game with 47...♔f6, although the win for White is merely a question of time.

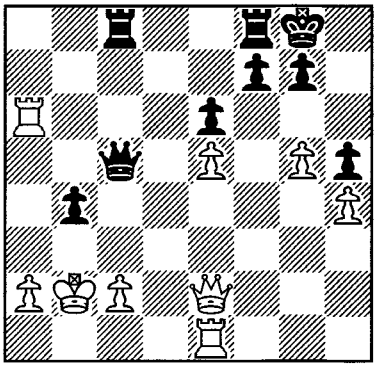
46 ♕d8+ ♔e6 47 ♔b2 f6 48 ♖f8 ♕g7 49 ♕c8+ ♔d5 50 ♕c4+ 1-0

Karpov: 'After this psychologically important win things went much better.' Tal: 'As often happens, this brilliant win sharply changed not so much the world champion's tournament position, as his mood. Karpov literally forced his way into the leading group, and then, without reducing speed, began overtaking his neighbours in the tournament table one after another.'

For some reason the ex-champion does not mention his meeting with Karpov in the 10th round, in which with Black he chose the same

variation of the Sicilian as Torre in Manila. On this occasion Karpov was prepared and he employed an interesting novelty, but Tal did not become flustered and offered a clever queen sacrifice, which clearly surprised the champion: he thought for 40 minutes over his reply. And in the end he thought it best to decline the sacrifice and offer a draw. But Tal refused! And indeed, White's position was already worse, and after a series of inaccuracies by Karpov it became altogether critical. According to eye-witnesses, Baturinsky went very pale at that moment.

Game 72
A.Karpov-M.Tal
44th USSR Championship,
Moscow 1976, 10th round



31...♖fd8

The simple 31...♕d4+ 32 ♔b1 ♕xh4 seemed unclear because of 33 g6, but these fears are not shared by computer: after 33...fxg6 with the threat of ...♖f2 Black is bound to win. 'It is difficult to convey what went on at that time in the hall and in the press centre. Everyone kept finding wins for the ex-world champion. But the champion continued to come out unscathed on the board.' (Roshal)

32 ♔b1 ♖d5?

An amnesty! The prophylactic 32...g6! followed by ...♖d5(4) would still have retained a winning position. Now, however, White finds the only saving resource.

33 g6! fxg6 34 ♖xe6 ♖cd8 35 ♖c1! ♕c3 36 ♖xg6 ♖xe5 37 ♕f2 ♖ed5 ½-½

The draw was greeted by an ovation in the auditorium. That evening Tal looked more than upset...

Only after this miraculous escape did Karpov indeed 'force his way into the leading group'. In the next six rounds – an amazing occurrence for him! – he won four games with Black (one of them, with K.Grigorian, is mentioned in the notes to *Volume 2, Game No.103*), and then also his last game with White. And he concluded the tournament in true champion style: 1. Karpov – 12 out of 17 (+8–1=8); 2. Balashov – 11; 3-4. Petrosian and Polugayevsky – 10½; 5. Dorfman – 9½; 6-7. Smyslov and Tal – 9, etc.

This USSR Championship provoked a wave of comments throughout the chess world. 'One gains the impression that Karpov, for all his frail appearance, was the only competitor in this marathon who not only maintained his strength, but even continued to increase the tempo right up to the finish. He had to accomplish a whole series of competitive feats,' grandmaster Donner wrote admiringly. He was echoed by grandmaster Byrne: 'Karpov is superior to his opponents in his ability to mobilise all this strength to the utmost at the decisive and most difficult moment.'

Early in 1977 the champion as though gained his second wind, and he achieved a series of brilliant results, which left no doubts about his superiority. In March – victory in Bad Lauterberg: 1. Karpov – 12 out of 15 (+9=6); 2. Timman – 10; 3. Furman – 9; 4. Sosonko – 8½ (ahead of Hübner, Olafsson, Gligoric, Miles, Andersson, Torre...). In April – an impressive 5 out of 5 at the European Team Championship in Moscow (wins over Smejkal, Ljubojevic, Gheorghiu, Portisch and Keene). In May – triumph in Las Palmas: 1.

Karpov – 13½ out of 15 (+12=3); 2. Larsen – 11; 3. Timman – 10 (ahead of Tal, Browne, Adorjan, Miles...).

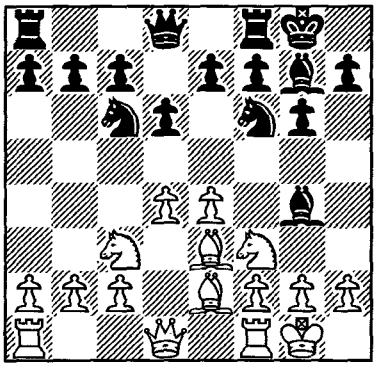
And only at the summer super-tournament in Leningrad, dedicated to the 60th anniversary of the October Revolution, did fatigue obviously begin to tell: Karpov finished behind Romanishin, Tal and Smyslov. However, even in this tournament he played several 'purely Karpovian games'. Here is one of these.

Game 73
A.Karpov-J.Smejkal
Leningrad 1977, 3rd round
Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence B08

1 e4 g6

In the spring, at the European Team Championship in Moscow, Smejkal had lost a 'Spanish duel' to Karpov, and now he tries his luck in another opening.

2 d4 ♗g7 3 ♘c3 d6 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 0-0 ♗g4 (6...c5 – *Game No.77*) **7 ♗e3 ♘c6**



8 ♕d2

Soon afterwards the champion introduced 8 ♕d3 (one of Zaitsev's ideas) 8...e5 9 d5 ♘b4 (9...♘e7!?) 10 ♕d2 a5 11 h3 ♗d7 12 ♗g5 with the initiative for White (Karpov-Korchnoi, 18th matchgame, Baguio 1978). But later it transpired that this can be neutralised by 8...♘d7 (Polugayevsky-Sax, Buenos Aires Olympiad 1978; Karpov-Timman, Amsterdam 1980).

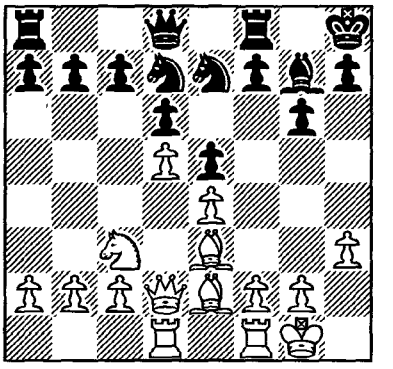
8...e5 9 d5 ♘e7 10 ♖ad1

A useful move: its main aim is to hinder ...c7-c6 to the maximum extent.

10...♔h8

The alternatives 10...♗d7, 10...♗xf3, 10...♘d7, 10...♘e8 and 10...b5 were discussed in the analysis of the game Geller-Tal (*Volume 2, Game No.101*).

11 h3 ♗xf3 12 ♗xf3 ♘d7 13 ♗e2



13...f5?!

Black should not have hurried with this move. All the same the prophylactic 13...a6 came into his plans, since then 14 f4 would lose its point: after 14...exf4 he would gain an excellent outpost at e5, whereas the e6-square would remain inaccessible to the white knight.

14 f4!

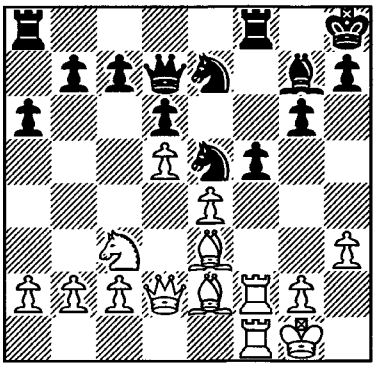
Now this advance is very timely: although he concedes control of the e5-square to Black, White gains fine play on the light squares in return.

14...a6

In the European Team Championship Keene recklessly tried to attack Karpov in King's Indian style – 14...g5?! But Black has little chance of creating serious threats to the white king without his light-squared bishop, and after 15 fxg5 f4 16 ♗f2 h6 17 gxh6 ♗xh6 a raid by the bishop into Black's position demonstrated the unsoundness of Keene's strategy: 18 ♗g4 ♘f6 19 ♕e2 ♖g8 20 ♗e6!

♖g7 21 ♔h1 ♘g6 22 ♖g1 ♕e7 23 ♖d3 ♖h7 24 ♗f5!, and White has a clear advantage.

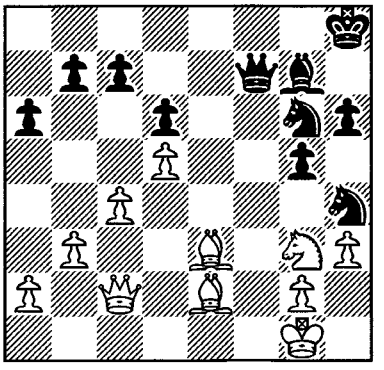
15 fxe5 ♘xe5 16 ♖f2 ♕d7 17 ♖df1



17...fxe4?!

The relieving of the pawn tension without sufficient justification usually makes things easier for the opponent. I would have preferred 17...♖ae8 18 ♗f4 ♘f7.

18 ♘xe4 ♖xf2 19 ♗xf2 h6 20 b3 ♖f8 21 c4 g5 22 ♘g3! ♘7g6 23 ♗e3 ♖xf1+ 24 ♗xf1 ♕f7 25 ♕c2 ♘h4 26 ♗e2 ♘eg6



There is a viscous, manoeuvring struggle in progress, in which Black constantly has to concern himself with consolidating his position.

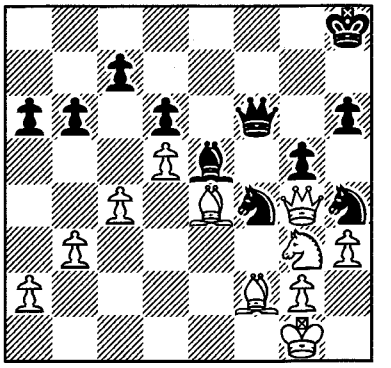
27 ♗d3?!

To me another regrouping seems far more dangerous: 27 ♗h5! ♕f6 28 ♕e4! Now 28...♕a1+ 29 ♘f1 ♕f6 30 g3 ♘f5 31 ♗f2 ♘ge7 32 ♘e3 ♕e5 33 ♕xe5 ♗xe5 34 ♘xf5 ♘xf5 leads to an endgame with two bishops against bishop and knight, in which White has quite good winning chances. And the attempt to counterattack – 28...♘f4 29 ♕e8+ ♔h7 30 ♗f7 ♕a1+ 31 ♘f1 h5 leaves White a pawn up as the result of a spectacular tactical skirmish: 32 ♗xf4 gxf4 33 ♕e4+ ♔h8 34 ♕xf4 ♗d4+ 35 ♔h1 ♗e3 36 ♕xe3 ♕xf1+ 37 ♕g1 ♕xf7 38 ♕d4+ and ♕xh4.

27...♗e5?

Missing an unexpected opportunity to activate his pieces: 27...♘f4! 28 ♗e4 ♕f6 with the intention of ...♕a1+ and ...♗e5. Smejkal, who was in his customary time-trouble, did not risk taking his queen far away from his king, and Karpov immediately finds an excellent opportunity to activate his own queen and remind the opponent of the weakness of the light squares in his position.

28 ♗f2 ♘f4 29 ♗e4 ♕f6 30 ♕d1! b6 31 ♕g4!



Somehow imperceptibly White has made much greater progress in strengthening his position, and it becomes hard for Black to find a good move.

31...♔g7?!

The more tenacious 31...♕d8 would have allowed White a pleasant choice between preparing to go into a favourable endgame – 32 ♘h5 ♘xh5 33 ♕xh5 ♕f6 34 ♕e8+ ♔g7 35 ♕d7+ ♕f7 36 ♕g4 ♘g6 37 g3, and the creation of an offensive on the queenside – 32 b4 ♕e8 33 c5.

32 ♗e3 ♔f7 33 ♕c8 ♕e7?

With his flag about to fall, Smejkal overlooks an unexpected bishop leap and loses immediately. However, 33...♘fxg2! followed by 34 ♕xc7+ ♔f8 35 ♕c8+ ♔f7 can be called better only because it contains a trap – 36 ♘h5? ♗h2+! 37 ♔h1 ♕a1+ 38 ♗c1 ♗e5!, and White has to give perpetual check: 39 ♕e6+ ♔f8 40 ♕xh6+ ♔f7 41 ♕h7+ ♔f8 42 ♗b1 ♕c3 43 ♕h6+ ♔f7. However, by 36 ♕e6+! ♕xe6 37 dxe6+ ♔xe6 38 ♗xg2 ♗xg3 39 ♗d5+ ♔f5 40 ♗xb6 he transposes into a technically won endgame.

34 ♗h7! ♘xh3+ 35 ♕xh3 1-0

The world champion concluded the year as he had begun it – on a victorious note, by confidently winning the autumn supertournament in Tilburg: 1. Karpov – 8 out of 11 (+5=6); 2. Miles – 7; 3-6. Hort, Hübner, Kavalek and Timman – 6, etc.

Soon, after the final Candidates match (cf. the chapter 'Belgrade Revenge'), Karpov's opponent in the match for the world championship was determined. To the dissatisfaction of the Soviet officials, it was the defector Viktor Korchnoi. As preparation for their coming encounters, both grandmasters played in strong tournaments in early 1978: one – in Wijk aan Zee (1. Portisch – 8 out of 11; 2. Korchnoi – 7½; 3. Andersson – 6½, etc.), and the other – in Bugojno (1-2. Karpov and Spassky – 10 out of 15; 3. Timman – 9, etc.).

The chess world, divided into West and East, hushed in anticipation of the long-awaited battle for the chess crown.

Baguio through the Eyes of Karpov

'The match in Baguio was the most troubled, the most scandalous event that I have ever taken part it,' recalls Karpov. 'Chess, the essence of which is a means of contact and mutual understanding between people, was transformed by Korchnoi into a field of animosity. Neither before nor after have I known anything like it... The match began rather ponderously. We tried to become accustomed to each other, probing to discover who was in what sort of form; we weren't in a hurry to reveal our trumps. After all, the match – for the first time in half a century – was unlimited, up to six wins. It was not possible to predict how long it would last. I only knew one thing: there was no reason to hurry.'

This match regulations, which had a significant influence on the course of chess history, had an interesting origin. They were drawn up by a special FIDE committee, the first meeting of which took place back in February 1976 in Amsterdam. From the USSR those who participated in the work were Karpov and Baturinsky, representing the Soviet Chess Federation. At that time, naturally, Karpov spoke against an unlimited match, which had been foisted on chess society by Fischer. The Soviet side suggested playing to six wins, but with a limit of 24-30 games, and in the event of a tie the champion would retain his title.

Baturinsky: 'However, it very soon became clear that the majority – and in particular the FIDE President Dr Euwe – were already set on an "unlimited" match. The discussions reached an impasse... But Euwe must be given his due – he found an interesting way out: not to place a limit, but to play to six wins (and not ten, as Fischer insisted in his time); with a score of 5-5 the world champion would retain his title, but – a very important addition! – "the challenger would gain the right to play a new match with the champion within a year". Then Euwe made another half step: the second match, if it was required, would be played with a restricted number of games. Everyone agreed to this, and yet it was not felt that this was the final decision.'

Everything was finally decided in the autumn of 1977 in Caracas, at a meeting of the FIDE Central Committee. One of the participants, grandmaster Averbakh, recalls that on the day of his arrival the Executive Director of the USA Chess Federation, Ed Edmondson, asked him to arrange a meeting with Karpov before the Committee began its work:

'And that evening they met with me present. Edmondson immediately took the bull by the horns: "What regulations do you prefer?" And to my surprise Karpov said: "I would agree to play to six wins, and with a score of 5-5 – to the first win, but in this case I would like to have the right to a return match.' *(Although long before this FIDE had abolished return matches. – G.K.)* "Excellent!" Edmondson exclaimed, "I will help to convince the committee members to adopt your conditions." And it all went through smoothly at the meeting of the Central Committee. The "local boss" Tudela, a well-known FIDE official, took the floor and proposed the conditions expressed above by the champion, adding "Only, we must ask Mr Karpov whether he is agreeable to these conditions?" Anatoly Evgenyevich graciously agreed... Edmondson merely gave a cunning smile. In Baguio, with Karpov's approval, he was appointed a member of the appeal jury.'

Karpov's speech was recorded for posterity by another eye-witness of these events, the press attaché of the Soviet delegation, Roshal: 'Many wish to see something new. Very well, I am prepared to play an unlimited match, even after having played such a large number of games in tournaments. Some are against the world champion having a draw "in reserve" – I also agree with that. I hope that I will not be required to play a return match. But if it should happen that way, that the challenger wins, then together with him the whole chess world will win too: millions of chess enthusiasts will receive a new stimulus towards the popularisation of our game in the form of a highly interesting return match. I am prepared to support this compromise.'

According to Roshal, the delegates began applauding Karpov even before the end of his speech, and 'only Euwe expressed some reservations about granting the world champion the right to a return match only in the event of him losing 5-6, but here he himself sensed that he was on his own.' The decision was approved almost unanimously. No one asked for the opinions of Korchnoi and Spassky, the participants in the final Candidates match. The situations that arose at the finish of the 1978 and 1984/85 matches could not then have been foreseen even in a terrible dream...

Of course, Karpov was considered the favourite in the match, but it should be borne in mind that not long before it started he suffered a severe, irreplaceable loss. In March 1978 Semion Furman died – he had been the champion's permanent mentor, an outstanding chess theoretician, who understood, like no one else, the nature of his protégé's talent and who had successfully solved the strategic preparation tasks. 'Furman's death killed something in me,' Karpov was to say years later. 'I was as though enslaved and I could not relax, in order to take in anything new, make it my own – and thereby change myself. The absence of novelty led to boredom, and for this reason alone I was unable to force myself to work, as once I had selflessly laboured worked with Furman.'

Before Baguio, for personal reasons, a second trainer of the champion – Yuri Razuvaev – also 'retired'. Reserves had to be mobilised: the main personnel of the renewed team – Balashov, Zaitsev and Tal – had been well known to Karpov for a long time. This powerful brigade 'unearthed' numerous novelties, and yet it seems to me that the absence of Furman's consolidating hand was sometimes felt over the lengthy distance of a very difficult match.

Especially for this book, the champion's long-standing trainer, grandmaster Igor Zaitsev, has shared his memories of those distant days:

'Our first, 18-day training session before Baguio took place in early spring 1978 not far from Sochi, in the picturesque environs of the famous Krasnaya Polyana. Apart from the chess players – Karpov, Vasyukov and me – also present at the session was Vladimir Zukhar, a professor of medicine, Valery Krylov,

an experienced physical trainer, and Viktor Bobylev, a chef, who later accompanied Karpov on nearly all his travels for many years. I was participating for the first time in such a colourful gathering. Everything here was new to me: from the relaxed Karpov, competing desperately at billiards, to the daily one and a half hour walks in the intoxicating mountain air with a discussion of all kinds of chess and non-chess events...

'There then followed a thorough, six-week training session for the champion in the Georgian city of Gagry, with the participation of Tal, Balashov and the author of these lines. Here the training group that was to fly out with Karpov to the Philippines was set up, and the range of opening problems, which we might encounter in the match with Korchnoi, was outlined.

'Although work on opening variations is in a state of constant flux, during a match itself one usually can only find various types of corrections and interesting micro-ideas. The production of large-scale analysis work is prevented by the everyday match commotion. For genuine theoretical dawnings and discoveries, prolonged deep concentration is required and even isolation. Therefore it was desirable to prepare all the main opening surprises before the match, and during it only to vary and refine the ideas found.

'For White our analytical group was constantly looking at the Open Variation of the Ruy Lopez, and, of course, the French Defence with 3 ♘d2 (just in case, we also worked on variations with the most critical continuation 3 ♘c3). For Black we studied three fields which caused us a mass of problems: the variation of the Queen's Gambit with 5 ♗f4, the Carlsbad set-up and all possible variations of the English Opening.

'In our training group the chess specialisation took place almost of its own accord. The tone in the analysis was set by the two outstanding players – Tal and Balashov. In addition, both of them possessed an outstanding and highly organised memory, and they could always offer exhaustive encyclopaedic information on any branch of theory, It was no accident that Furman, when exhorting young players, impressed on them: "If you want to know the latest word in theory, follow Tal's games: he picks up new ideas more quickly than others!" Balashov's memory easily accommodated all the classics and the entire body of modern opening theory. At the same time, you could always find out from him, for example, what day of the week it was on 31 October 1892, when Alekhine was born. I also cannot complain of my memory (I still give blindfold simultaneous displays), but when I encounter phenomenal manifestations of it – say, with Balashov, Tal, Kasparov or Ivanchuk, I involuntarily feel the great difference.

'In this division of labour I was usually assigned the rather honourable role of the "clear head" – a person capable of looking at a position with unprejudiced eyes and from an unexpected angle. Apparently, thanks to these qualities, I was able to invent a whole series of completely new opening schemes and numerous improvements in variations during my period of active collaboration with Karpov.

'The villa in Baguio, where Karpov was accommodated, was a gigantic old building, remaining from virtually the times of the conquistadors. A special tent of solid polyethylene was constructed above us so that no instrumentation could listen to us during our preparations. However, it wasn't possible to remain inside such a confined space for long: within some forty minutes it became hard to breathe and your face became covered in a film of water (we are talking about the oceanic subtropics!). In good weather, after dividing into pairs, we would do our analysis in an open space on the first floor from morning till evening, with a short break for lunch. But as soon as it became dark, bats suddenly began noisily flying about and the entire space was filled with myriad insects and moths. And willy-nilly we had to move back into our polyethylene

paradise... During three months of searchings and anguish, we gave birth to a number of good ideas, although some "miscarriages" also occurred, as Tal wittily commented.'

The first game lasted only two hours. Karpov: 'After making my 18th move, I offered a draw with full justification. Korchnoi thought a little, and then, without replying, gave it up as a bad job and began signing his score-sheet. I also signed my score-sheet and handed it to him; he pushed his somewhere to one side and, without looking up, signed my score-sheet. Then he quickly left, without offering his hand to me. But I thought that it was no less essential to do this, than before the start of a game (Tal, who was also present, was of the same opinion). Yes, Korchnoi immediately indicated that he saw the handshake as a pure formality.'

It would appear that for Karpov this was one of those drops, which soon overfilled his cup of patience. Another episode occurred after the drawn 2nd game, where there was an ending with rook and bishop against rook and knight. Anatoly reported that Korchnoi had said: 'Karpov heard somewhere that a bishop is better than a knight. In the hands of Leonid Stein, perhaps, but not in his!' There were also verbal attacks on Tal, to say nothing of Doctor Zukhar, who had already landed on the 4th row (about this – cf. the chapter 'Baguio through the Eyes of Korchnoi'). And as a result, Karpov suddenly refused to shake hands before the 8th game, which unsettled Korchnoi. This was a violation of the rules, and at the champion's request Roshal read out a statement in the press centre, explaining the reasons for this act: '...Recent events have shown that the challenger has no intention of rejecting his course of aggravating the situation. Under such circumstances Karpov does not wish to shake hands with Korchnoi.'

However, in the given instance we are more interested in what happened on the chessboard. Let us again hand over to Zaitsev:

'From the character of the opening battle we soon sensed that Korchnoi had prepared not haphazardly, as we had, but more purposefully and thoroughly, having firmly decided in advance the range of variations and set-ups which he intended to uphold in the match. The start of the match proved anxious: in the 3rd and 5th games Karpov encountered serious problems with Black, in the second of these saving himself from defeat only by a miracle (*Game No.29*). Any player who is planning to perform successfully hopes in the first instance for success with the white pieces, but in the initial games Anatoly was quite unable to gain any marked advantage in the Open Variation of the Spanish. In the 2nd game Korchnoi deliberately "fed" us a second-rate and, I would say, not very high-quality novelty. At home we quickly established its flaws, but in the 4th game the challenger, as though driven by some kind of special sense, deviated and again renovated the variation. And only in the 8th game was Karpov able finally to refute the opponent's risky opening strategy (cf. p.120). The fact that Karpov managed to cope with a difficult problem at the board had far-reaching consequences.

'Korchnoi, who by nature was a keen observer, had no doubt noticed long before that in the opening Karpov only very rarely plays for a direct refutation of the opponent's plan and is usually prepared to satisfy himself with a solid positional solution, transferring the centre of gravity to middlegame manoeuvring. Only this can explain the occasional appearance in Korchnoi's Black repertoire of theoretically not altogether reliable variations – such as 4...f5 in the Spanish (20th game of the 1974 match). In Baguio we thought it possible that the Riga and Berlin Variations might be played once (a variety of the latter turned up later in Merano). And we thought that his experience of employing the Dragon – a success in the 5th game of their training match (1971) and a catastrophe in the 2nd game of the Candidates match (Game *No.67*) – should have indicated to Korchnoi just how danger-

ous it was to repeat dubious experiments against Karpov. However, in Baguio, when the champion was acting not very confidently, the challenger adhered to this risky course.

'In my view, Korchnoi very keenly sensed his opponent's condition and in general was distinguished by his outstanding psychological perception. In 1974 I was seconding Petrosian in his losing match with Korchnoi and I remembered for ever a highly unusual incident. During the 5th game, which proved to be the last in the match, in a fit of temper I made some harmless comment about Viktor Lvovich in a quiet whisper. Play was taking place in the enormous hall of the drama theatre, and on this occasion I was sitting in the dress circle, quite a long way from the stage... But, oh horror: Korchnoi, who was thinking over his move, instantly turned his head and from among the thousand-strong mass of supporters he fixed his gaze on me!

'After opening his account in the 8th game, Karpov tried to build on his success in the 10th by employing my sharp novelty in the Open Variation – 11 ♘g5!? I had brought this idea to Krasnaya Polyana, and Karpov immediately took a fancy to it: we were constantly trying to perfect it. It became our heavy artillery, and it only remained to await a convenient moment to bring it into action. The knight sacrifice created a genuine furore in the chess world, but, alas, it did not produce the practical effect that we had hoped for. After thinking for a total of about an hour, Korchnoi made his way excellently through the tactical nuances and found a defence (cf. *Volume 2, Game No.118*).

'And so, the theoretical torpedo missed its target, without having any marked influence on the competitive course of the match. But it nevertheless had a definite mutual psychological effect. The opponent saw that in the opening we had not only light machine-guns, but also howitzers, and he began acting far more cautiously. But the same episode also forced all of us to pull ourselves together: we had seen Korchnoi's enormous chess potential with our own eyes.'

Karpov: 'The win in the 8th game did not lessen the tension that was growing in me with every day. I needed to change my play more decisively, but as yet I was not ready for that. And in the 10th game this told. Korchnoi withstood a very heavy blow and defended brilliantly, whereas I did not exploit all my opportunities. It didn't work immediately – and I was as though reconciled to this, and did not bother seeking a win. Here I should have taken a time-out, but I didn't think to do that, and I set off for the next game.'

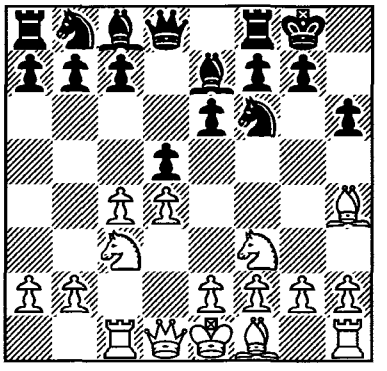
After his defeat in the 11th game the champion finally took a time-out, but the rest did not bring any relief: 'Everything should be done at the right time!' When he went along to the 12th game, he did not feel any desire to play: 'In this game I somehow just served my time. If Korchnoi had realised my condition, I would have been in trouble. But I successfully imitated the desire to gain immediate revenge, composure, confidence, energy – and he thought only about equalising, and after achieving it he did not conceal his satisfaction. The danger was over... But the crisis could not last for ever. The turning point game in the 13th game. Not before, nor after – during the game. But the game began like the preceding ones: I played without desire, as though detached, increasingly unable to keep pace with my opponent's thoughts...'

Game 74
V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov
World Championship Match,
Baguio 1978, 13th game
Queen's Gambit D53

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 d4 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗h4 0-0 7 ♖c1

Korchnoi's patent plan. The 1st, exploratory game of the match went 7 e3 b6 8 ♖c1 (8 cxd5 – *Volume 4, Game No.103*; 8 ♗e2 – *Game No.65*) 8...♗b7 9 ♗d3 (also avoiding 9 ♗xf6!?

♗xf6 10 cxd5 – *Game No.28*) 9...dxc4 10 ♗xc4 ♘bd7 11 0–0 c5 12 dxc5 ♘xc5 13 ♕e2 a6 14 ♖fd1 ♕e8 15 a3 ♘fe4 with equality. And 15 ♘e5 b5 16 ♘xb5?! (Kasparov-Karpov, 36th matchgame, Moscow 1984/85) is refuted by 16...♕b8!



7...b6 (later Karpov introduced 7...dxc4! – *Game No.84*) **8 ♗xf6** (8 cxd5 – *Volume 3, Game No.39*) **8...♗xf6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 g3**

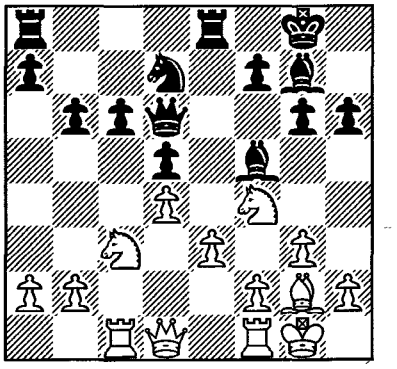
By developing his bishop at g2, White wants to hinder ...c7-c5 by putting pressure on the d5-pawn, while after ...c7-c6, as in the game, he can restrict the black pawn chain by b2-b4.

10...c6

A solid set-up, where all the conflicts are deferred to the middlegame. 10...♗e6 11 ♗g2 c5 12 0-0 ♘c6 13 dxc5 bxc5 is more active. Not long before the match this is what one of Karpov's recent trainers played; the continuation was 14 ♘e1 ♖b8 15 ♘d3 c4 16 ♘f4 ♖xb2 17 ♘cxd5 ♗xd5 18 ♗xd5 ♘e5 with equality (Olafsson-Geller, Wijk aan Zee 1977), but in the event of 15 ♘xd5! ♗xd5 16 ♗xd5 ♘b4 17 ♗b3 Black would still have had to fight for equality.

11 ♗g2 ♗f5 12 0-0 ♕d6 13 e3 ♘d7 14 ♘e1 ♖fe8 15 ♘d3 g6 16 ♘f4 ♗g7

The light-squared bishop could have been retained by 16...h5, but Karpov did not like the fact that after 17 h4 the pawn chains on the kingside would have lost their mobility, whereas on the queenside White would have retained some opportunities for pressure.



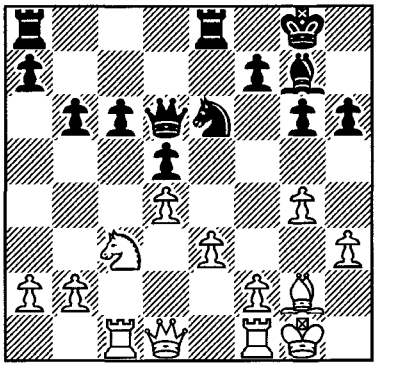
17 g4!

Sharp and at the same time forced: if Black were to succeed in placing his knight at f6, he would be able to begin advancing his g- and h-pawns.

17...♗e6 18 h3 ♘f8

18...♘f6 (Karpov) 19 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 also looks quite good, but Black does not want to block his bishop at g7.

19 ♘xe6 (of course, ...♗d7 should not be allowed) **19...♘xe6**



Karpov does not like to spoil his pawn structure, although he points out that '19...fxe6 was interesting', potentially strengthening the mobility of the black pawn chain in the centre. White would have had to suppress the idea of ...e6-e5 with 20 f4, and his chances in the subsequent play would have been better: 20...♖ac8 21 ♘e2 c5 22 ♕d2 cxd4 23

exd4 ♘d7 24 ♕d3.

20 ♕d3 ♖ad8

'Since there is no prospect of advancing ...c6-c5, there is nothing for the rook to do at d8. Black should have thought about playing his queen to the kingside (...♕e7-h4) and attacking the advanced white pawns by ...h6-h5 or ...f7-f5.' (Karpov)

21 ♖c2 ♘c7 22 ♘a4

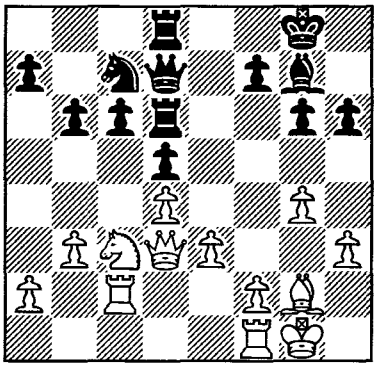
Doubling rooks – 22 ♖fc1 would not have prevented Black from freeing himself: 22...c5! 23 dxc5 bxc5 24 ♘b5 ♘xb5 25 ♕xb5 d4!

22...♕d7 23 b3 ♖e6

Black continues to play without a clear plan, directing his rook to d6, where it will occupy a passive position. '23...♘b5 with the idea of ...♘d6 came into consideration' (Karpov), not fearing the pressure of the white rooks on the c6-pawn.

24 ♘c3 ♖d6

Again a questionable decision, allowing White to begin active play. After 24...♗f8 (Karpov: 'preventing b3-b4') it would have been far more difficult to play this.



25 b4! ♗f8 26 ♘e2 b5

The outpost at c4 is now more important for Black than control of c5.

27 ♕b3!

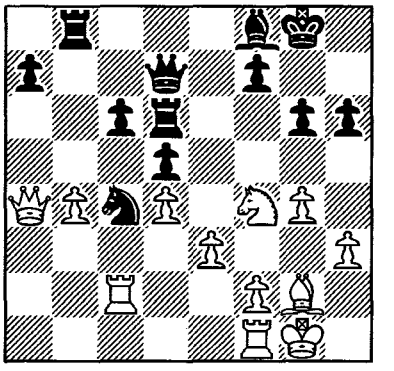
A move which solves two important problems: the route ♘e2-c1-d3-c5 is vacated for the knight and the undermining move a2-a4 is prepared.

27...♘a8 28 a4! bxa4

It is not possible to obtain a comfortable post at c4: 28...♘b6 29 axb5 cxb5 30 ♘f4 ♘c4 31 ♖a1 a6 32 ♖ca2 ♕b7 33 ♘d3 ♖e6 34 ♘c5 ♗xc5 35 dxc5 with an obvious advantage. And 'if 28...a6 there follows 29 a5, and the knight turns out to be offside.' (Karpov)

29 ♕xa4 ♘b6 30 ♕b3 ♖b8 31 ♘f4 ♘c4 32 ♕a4

The immediate exchange sacrifice 32 ♖xc4 dxc4 33 ♕xc4 promised little in view of the weakness of the b4-pawn: after 33...♖b6 34 ♖a1 ♕b7 35 ♘d3 ♖d8 36 ♗e4 ♔g7 37 ♖a4 ♖b8 Black should be able to hold on. Korchnoi does not hurry to force events, but continues to strengthen his position.



32...f5

True to his playing manner, on the threshold of time-trouble Karpov sharpens the play at the cost of weakening his own king. Nevertheless, it would have been safer first to exchange the a7- and b4-pawns: 32...♖b5 33 ♖a2 a5 34 bxa5 ♖xa5 35 ♕c2 ♖xa2 36 ♕xa2 f5 (Karpov) 37 gxf5 ♕xf5, although even here Black still has to demonstrate equality after 38 ♕b1.

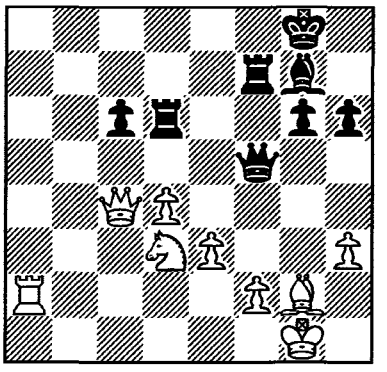
33 gxf5 ♕xf5 34 ♕xa7 ♖xb4 35 ♖a2 ♕c8 36 ♖c1 ♖b7 37 ♕a4

Karpov was more afraid of 37 ♕a6, thinking the pin to be rather unpleasant. However, after the simple 37...♕d7 38 ♗f1 c5 39 ♕a4 cxd4! (39...♕xa4? 40 ♖xa4 cxd4 41 ♗g2!) Black defends: 40 ♕xd7 ♖bxd7 41 exd4 ♘b6.

37...♖f7 38 ♖xc4!

With his flag about to fall, White sacrifices the exchange. True, he is not risking anything, since his subsequent moves are clear.

38...dxc4 39 ♕xc4 ♕f5 40 ♘d3 ♗g7



The time control was reached, and it was time to adjourn the game. Karpov: 'I sat down at the board in one condition, and stood up from it in another. I sensed a turning point – I suddenly realised that I was seeing everything with different, former, pre-crisis eyes: everything suddenly became vivid, distinct and interesting. How this game would end also suddenly became interesting to me. And the fact that subsequently I would play well, at full strength, was something that I had no doubts about.'

41 ♖a7

Korchnoi thought over this secret move for *40 minutes! The adjourned position is* certainly unpleasant for Black – one of those where there is no clear way to draw, but also no forced win. The two players had a few days for analysis, and it was established that neither 41 f4, nor 41 ♘b4, nor 41 ♘c5 gave any real winning chances. The sealed move was also subjected to a thorough analysis.

Korchnoi: 'In search of the unattainable, I spent half the night with my helpers, got tired and the following day decided to take a time-out – to postpone the resumption.' And this took place only after the 14th game, which was also adjourned, but in a hopeless position for him. Thus, for the first time in the history of world championship matches, two games were resumed on the same evening. This was one of the culminating moments of the battle in Baguio!

As the course of the resumption showed, the analysis of the Karpov brigade was deeper.

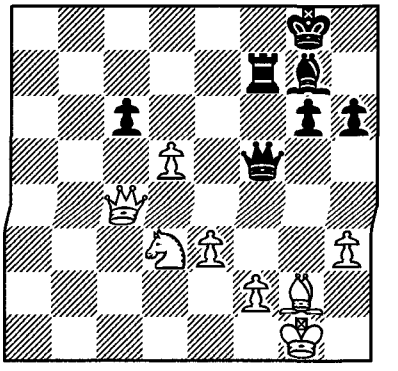
41...♖df6!

'The endgame after 41...♕e6 42 ♕xe6 ♖xe6 43 ♖a6 is very unpleasant in view of the threat of d4-d5.' (Karpov)

42 ♖xf7

After 42 ♖b7 the best defence is offered by 42...♗f8! (42...♔h7?? 43 e4!) 43 ♖xf7 ♖xf7 44 ♘e5 ♕xf2+ 45 ♔h1 ♗d6 46 ♘xf7 ♕xf7 47 ♕xc6 ♕c7!, and 'after the exchange of queens the endgame with opposite-coloured bishops is drawn' (Karpov). But White has a possibility of retaining the queens – 48 ♕a8+ ♔g7 49 ♕a1. Now after 49...g5 the exchange of queens and a draw results from 50 e4 ♗f4 51 e5 ♕c1+ 52 ♕xc1 ♗xc1 53 d5 ♗b2 54 e6 ♗a3, but 50 ♗e4 leaves White some chances of success.

42...♖xf7 43 d5



43...♗e5!

Excellent! The bishop is ideally placed on the b8-h2 diagonal, where it is not only blocking the pawn, but also eying the white king. 'And the exchange of the bishop (44 ♘xe5 ♕xe5) would have made things easier for Black' (Karpov). According to the champion, this key move was suggested by Baturinsky, the leader of the Soviet delegation (who was a

solid candidate master).

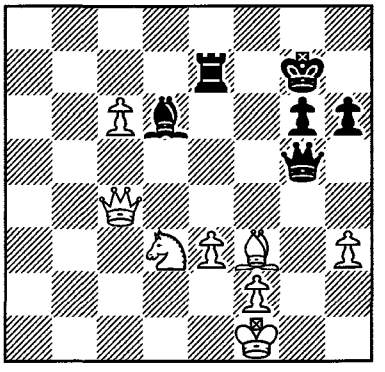
44 dxc6

Paired with its colleague on the e-file, the passed d-pawn would have been hard to stop, but the separated e- and c-pawns do not present any danger.

44...♔g7 45 ♗e4

Here Korchnoi was again in time-trouble: the manoeuvre 43...♗e5 obviously came as a surprise to him. However, White's position, if he is still dreaming of winning, is not so easy to strengthen. The advance of the pawns weakens his own king. Thus after 45 e4 ♕h5 the threat of ...♕e2 forces 46 ♘xe5 ♕xe5. And if 45 f4 ♗c7 46 e4 there is the strong manoeuvre 46...♕a5, forcing White to act cautiously: if 47 ♕d4+ ♔h7 48 ♔h2, then 48...g5!

45...♕g5+ 46 ♔f1 ♗d6 47 ♗d5 ♖e7 48 ♗f3



48...h5

Tal approves of this move, 'just in case' depriving the white bishop of the g4-square and expanding the king's shelter. The less ambitious 48...♕f6 would also not have left White any particular chances of success – both in the endgame after 49 ♕d4 ♕xd4 50 exd4 ♔f8 51 ♘b2 (51 ♗g4 ♔e8 and ...♔d8) 51...♖e6 52 ♘c4 ♔e7, and in the event of 49 ♘f4 (49 ♗e4 ♕e6!?) 49...♗xf4 50 exf4 ♕d6.

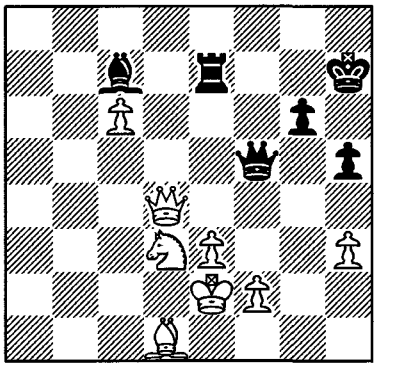
49 ♗d1

In severe time-trouble Korchnoi does not want to take any radical decisions and only after the 56th move does he intend to weigh up the possibilities of playing for a win. The exchange of queens 49 ♕d4+ ♕f6 50 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 would have led to an equal endgame, for example: 51 h4 ♖a7 52 ♗d5 ♖a5 53 e4 g5!

49...♕f5 50 ♔e2 ♖e4 51 ♕c3+ ♕f6 (51...♔h7? was dangerous: 52 c7 ♖e8 53 ♗c2!) **52 ♕b3**

Again avoiding the exchange of queens, which would be equivalent to a draw offer: 52 ♕xf6+ ♔xf6 53 ♗b3, and if 53...♖h4, then 54 f4 ♖xh3 55 ♘f2 ♖h4(2) 56 ♔f3 with the threat of ♔g3.

52...♕f5 53 ♕b7+ (again avoiding 53 ♕c3+ ♕f6 54 ♕xf6+; Korchnoi wants to enter the new time control with the queens on – he is still hoping to win!) **53...♖e7 54 ♕b2+ ♔h7 55 ♕d4 ♗c7**



56 ♕h4??

With his last move before the time control White blunders, removing his queen to the edge of the board. The cool-headed 56 ♕c5, although it would have allowed the exchange of queens – 56...♕xc5 (after 56...♕f6 57 ♗b3 Korchnoi would have achieved his aim – a complicated position with the queens on) 57 ♘xc5 etc. would have allowed him to play on with the draw in hand.

56...♖e4! 57 f4 (to save the queen, this pawn has to be advanced at the most inappropriate moment) **57...♗b6! 58 ♗c2 ♖xe3+ 59 ♔d2 ♕a5+ 60 ♔d1 ♕a1+ 61 ♔d2 ♖e4 0-1**

The was one of Korchnoi's Filipino trage-

dies (along with the 5th and 17th games). It was amazingly impractical: to think over the sealed move for 40 minutes, and then take a time-out... Oleg Skuratov, a friend from his youth, wrote: 'Viktor never spared himself, never husbanded his strength. This extravagance reverberated especially strongly in Baguio. Seeing his fatal oversights, I involuntarily remembered Korchnoi the student, playing blitz games for days on end. Carried away by the play, he did not think about the consequences of such stress.' Karpov too used to be carried away by blitz, but in his case one should rather talk about the consequences of the stress of playing protracted matches.

In the 14th game the champion's staff finally found the key to a variation in which the challenger had gained two draws at the start of the match. Karpov: 'I conducted this game in my best traditions.' On encountering another novelty, Korchnoi held on with all his might, but close to the 30th move he cracked under the burden of an exhausting, laborious defence.

Game 75
A.Karpov-V.Korchnoi
World Championship Match,
Baguio 1978, 14th game
Ruy Lopez C82

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 c3 (9 ♘bd2 – *Game Nos.85 and 86*) **9...♗c5 10 ♘bd2 0-0 11 ♗c2 ♗f5 12 ♘b3 ♗g4**

Three years later in Merano, Korchnoi successfully tried 12...♗g6! (*Game No.35*).

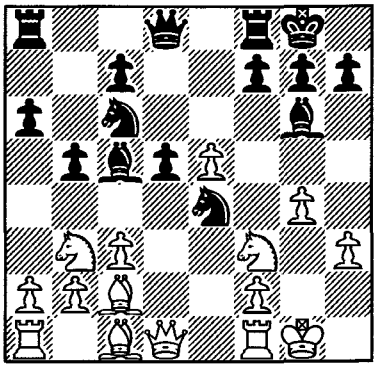
13 h3!?

A surprise! The usual unpretentious play for the advantage of the two bishops – 13 ♘xc5 ♘xc5 14 ♖e1, as in Bronstein-Flohr (USSR Championship 1944), Euwe-Eliskases (Mar del Plata 1947) and Fischer-Larsen (Santa Monica 1966), did not bring White any dividends in the 2nd and 4th games here.

13...♗h5

Karpov merely mentioned the sharper move 13...♗xf3, while Tal called it not unfavourable for White. Indeed, it is hard to decide, the more so without special analysis, on the unclear play after 14 gxf3 (14 ♕xf3?! ♘xe5 Navarro-I.Ivanov, Cienfuegos 1980) 14...♘xf2 15 ♖xf2 ♗xf2+ 16 ♔xf2 ♘xe5 or 16...♕h4+ 17 ♔g2 ♘xe5 – the white bishops may have their say!

14 g4! ♗g6



This position was considered quite acceptable for Black, but the champion's staff had prepared a new idea, which struck the 12...♗g4 variation a serious blow.

15 ♗xe4!

'It occurred to me that it is possible to go by force into an endgame, where the presence of opposite-coloured bishops does not diminish, but even increases White's advantage.' (Karpov)

15...dxe4 16 ♘xc5 exf3 17 ♗f4!

The basis of White's idea. Karpov does not miss the opportunity to gain another small plus: to save his f3-pawn, Black himself is forced to exchange queens – and to present his opponent with an extra tempo.

17...♕xd1

'After 17...♕e7 White gains a tempo by 18 ♕d5 ♘a5 19 b4 ♘c4 20 ♖fe1, and the f3-pawn is lost.' (Karpov): 20...a5! 21 a3! etc.

18 ♖axd1 ♘d8!

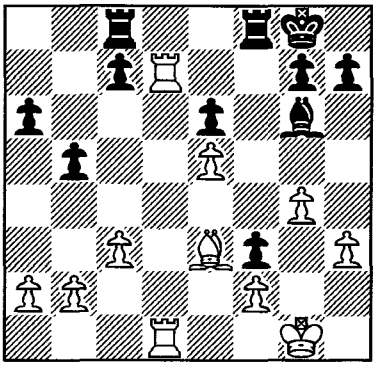
The best defence. Black exchanges the strong knight at c5 and creates a strong point

in the centre for his bishop, thereby retaining his f3-pawn. Korchnoi even allows the enemy rook onto the 7th rank, as he sees how it will be possible to drive it out from there.

19 ♖d7 ♘e6 20 ♘xe6 fxe6 21 ♗e3 (Karpov reached this position at home) **21...♖ac8**

The exchange of one pair of rooks after 21...♖f7?! 22 ♖fd1 (Karpov) 22...♖af8 23 ♗c5 ♖xd7 24 ♖xd7 ♖c8 25 ♔h2 ♗e4 26 ♔g3 ♗d5 27 h4 would have allowed White real winning chances.

22 ♖fd1



22...♗e4!

At just the right time. Delaying with 22...h5?! would have conceded the 7th rank to White: 23 gxh5 ♗xh5 24 ♖e7 and ♖dd7 (Karpov).

23 ♗c5!

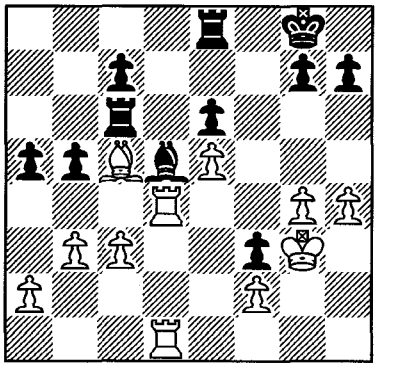
Forcing the rook to leave the f-file and take up a passive position; but the white rook too is forced to retreat, and this is an undoubted achievement for Black.

23...♖fe8 24 ♖7d4 (after 24 ♔h2 ♗c6 the rook would have been driven from d7) **24...♗d5 25 b3 a5 26 ♔h2 ♖a8 27 ♔g3 ♖a6**

After achieving success in setting up a defence, Korchnoi relaxed and decided to try and prevent c3-c4 by simple means. He avoided the more tenacious 27...a4 28 c4 bxc4 29 bxc4 ♗c6, possibly not noticing that if 30 a3 there is the strong reply 30...♖a5! Karpov asserts that even without 30 a3 'White has an obvious positional advantage', but it would have merely consisted in complete domination of the d-file, on which there are no invasion squares. White would then have had to try and open a second front on the kingside...

28 h4 ♖c6?

A serious error. It was not yet too late to play 28...a4, but Korchnoi is carried away by the faulty idea of transferring his rook and he does not sense the danger.



29 ♖xd5!

In the event of the 'obvious' 20 b4 Black would hardly have been in danger of losing. With this unexpected exchange sacrifice Karpov discloses the flaw in Korchnoi's plan, exploiting the fact that for the moment the enemy rooks lack coordination. Black is again inundated with problems.

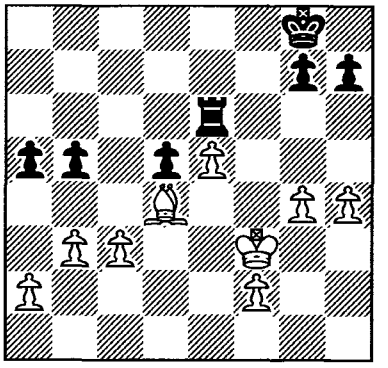
29...exd5 30 ♖xd5 ♖ce6 31 ♗d4 c6 32 ♖c5

Just three moves have passed, but how strikingly the situation on the board has changed! Black's rooks are passively placed, his queenside pawns are obvious targets, and the f3-pawn is altogether doomed. If the white pawn phalanx should begin advancing, Black will be unable to hold out.

32...♖f8?

Now the game cannot be saved. Black's defensive resources were far from exhausted, and in the first instance he should have exchanged rooks: 32...♖d8! 33 ♔xf3 ♖d5 34 ♖xd5 cxd5. In this case White's task

would have been seriously complicated, and perhaps it would have become altogether unrealisable!



Analysis diagram

If White moves his king, preparing to advance the f-pawn, Black finds very convincing counterplay:

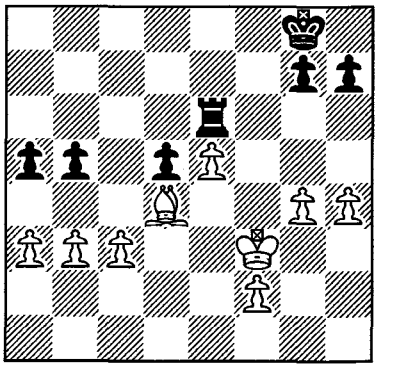
1) 35 ♔g3 b4! 36 f4 ♖c6! 37 cxb4 axb4 38 f5 ♖c2 39 e6 ♖xa2 40 ♔f3 (in the event of 40 g5? ♖e2! with the threat of ...g7-g6 White is in danger of losing: 41 ♗c5 ♖e4 42 e7 g6 43 fxg6 hxg6 44 ♗xb4 ♔f7, and the black d-pawn comes into the action) 40...♖a3 41 ♔f4 ♖xb3 42 g5 ♖h3 43 ♗c5 ♖xh4+ 44 ♔e5 b3 (after 44...♖g4 45 ♔d6 the g5-pawn cannot be taken, but 45...b3 still saves Black) 45 f6 ♖e4+ (not 45...gxf6+? 46 gxf6 ♖e4+ on account of 47 ♔f5! and wins) 46 ♔xd5 gxf6! 47 gxf6 (after 47 ♔xe4? b2 the new queen appears with check!) 47...♖f4, and the draw is obvious;

2) 35 ♔e3 h5! 36 gxh5 (36 f3 is harmless: 36...hxg4 37 fxg4 b4! 38 h5 ♖c6 39 ♔d3 ♔f7) 36...♖h6 37 ♔f4 ♖xh5 38 ♔g4 g6! 39 a4! (winning the a5-pawn is White's only chance) 39...bxa4 40 bxa4 ♔f7 41 f4 ♔e6 42 ♗b6 ♖h8 43 ♔g5 (after 43 ♗xa5 ♖a8 44 ♗b6 ♖xa4 45 ♔g5 ♖a2 46 ♔xg6 ♖g2+ White's king is pushed back to the edge of the board, which deprives him of any chances) 43...♖h5+! (43...♔f7?! is passive: 44 ♗xa5! ♖a8 45 ♗b4 ♖xa4 46 e6+! ♔xe6 47 ♔xg6, but even here, by playing 47...d4 48 f5+ ♔d7! – the only move: 48...♔d5? 49 f6 d3 50 c4+! ♔xc4 51 f7 ♖a8 52 ♗d2 etc. – 49 f6 d3, after the appearance of the new queens it would appear that Black is not losing) 44 ♔xg6 ♖xh4 45 f5+ ♔xe5 46 ♗c7+ ♔e4 47 f6 ♖g4+ 48 ♔h5 ♖g1 49 f7 ♖f1 50 ♔g6 d4 with a draw, since the a-pawn's promotion square is not controlled by the bishop.

However, White can forestall the counterplay with ...h7-h5 (by 35 h5) or with ...b5-b4 (35 a3). Thus:

3) 35 h5 b4! (35...♖c6 36 ♔e3 or 36 a3! leads to variations already examined; the mechanical forestalling of the advance is less good – 35...g5 36 hxg6 hxg6 37 ♔e3 g5 38 f4! gxf4+ 39 ♔xf4 ♔f7 40 ♔f5 ♖c6, and after 41 a3 it transpires that manoeuvring the rook between c6, e6 and g6 does not give a draw, for example: 41...a4 42 bxa4 bxa4 43 g5 ♖e6 44 ♗c5, and after 44...♖c6 there follows 45 ♗d6!, while if 44...♖g6 – 45 ♗e7!, then ♗f6, and White's passed pawns begin advancing) 36 ♔e3 ♖c6! 37 ♔d3 (in the event of 37 cxb4 axb4 38 f4 ♖a6 things are simpler for Black) 37...g6! 38 hxg6 ♖xg6 39 f3 ♔f7 40 cxb4 axb4 41 ♗c5 ♖a6, achieving saving counterplay after both 42 ♔d4 ♖xa2 43 ♔xd5 ♖d2+ 44 ♗d4 ♖d3 45 f4 ♖xb3 46 e6+ ♔e8 47 f5 ♖d3 48 ♔e4 ♖g3 49 ♔f4 ♖d3, and 42 ♗xb4 ♖xa2 43 ♗d6 ♖f2 44 ♔e3 ♖f1 45 b4 d4+ 46 ♔xd4 ♖xf3 47 b5 ♔e6 48 b6 ♖b3;

4) 35 a3!



Analysis diagram

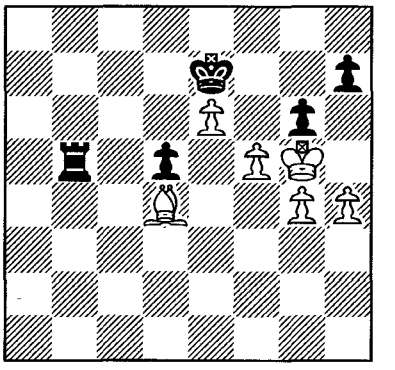
This is how Karpov 'was intending to continue, in order to create a fortress on the queenside by b3-b4 and only then advance the kingside pawns.' This gives the greatest chances of success: White hinders the activation of the rook and plans ♔g3 and f2-f4. Here 35...h5? is a pawn sacrifice, which Black cannot permit himself: 36 gxh5 ♖e8 37 ♔g4 (37 b4!?) 37...b4 38 axb4 axb4 39 cxb4 ♖b8 40 ♗c5 d4 41 ♔f4, and White should win. And passive defence by 35...g6? is gradually breached after 36 ♔g3: Karpov gives only the hopeless 36...♖e8? 37 f4 ♖f8 38 e6 (38 h5! is even better), but 36...h5 also does not help – 37 f4 hxg4 38 ♔xg4 ♔f7 39 ♔g5 (not 39 h5? gxh5+ 40 ♔xh5 ♖g6 41 f5 ♖g2, and with his king cut off, White cannot win) 39...♖e8 40 f5 gxf5 41 ♔xf5 ♖e6 42 ♗e3 ♖c6 43 ♗d2 (the h-pawn is ready to advance, and Black's counterplay is too late) 43...b4 44 axb4 axb4 45 cxb4 ♖c2 46 e6+ etc.

Therefore Black must aim for the immediate activation of his rook – 35...♖c6!, and in the event of 36 ♔g3 b4! 37 axb4 axb4 38 cxb4 ♖c1 39 e6 ♖e1 40 ♗e3 (or 40 b5 ♖xe6 41 b6 ♖e7 42 f4 g6) 40...♔f8 41 ♔f4 ♔e7 42 ♔e5 d4 43 ♔xd4 ♔xe6 it would appear that he gains a draw.

White can radically suppress the idea of ...b5-b4 by 36 b4 ('à la Karpov'), but then the a-file is opened for the rook: 36...axb4 37 axb4 ♔f7 38 ♔g3 ♔e6 39 f4 g6 40 h5 ♖a6 41 ♔h4 ♖a2 42 ♔g5 ♖g2 with equality. Instead of 38 ♔g3 it is stronger to play 38 ♔f4!, and after 38...♔e6 39 ♔g5! or 38...♖a6 39 ♔f5! g6+ 40 ♔g5 ♖a1 41 f4 ♖f1 42 f5 gxf5 (42...h6+ 43 ♔xh6 gxf5 44 g5!) 43 gxf5 h6+ 44 ♔g4 things are clearly bad for Black. But here too he finds a reply: 38...h6! 39 h5 g6 40 hxg6+ ♖xg6, and since if 41 ♔f5 there is 41...♖g5+, if 41 ♔g3 – 41...h5 and if 41 f3 – 41...♔e6, White has to be satisfied with a draw.

Now, in search of a win, the following line very much suggests itself: 36 ♔f4 ♔f7 37 ♔f5, and after 37...h6? 38 h5 followed by f2-f4 Black most probably is unable to hold out. He must play energetically: 37...g6+ 38 ♔g5 b4! 39 axb4 axb4 40 cxb4 ♖c1 41 f4 ♖d1! (41...♖f1? 42 h5 h6+ 43 ♔xh6 gxh5 44 f5! hxg4 45 e6+ ♔e7 46 ♔g6, and the white pawns are irresistible) 42 ♗c5 d4 43 f5 gxf5 44 gxf5 h6+! (not immediately 44...d3? on account of 45 e6+ ♔g8 46 f6) 45 ♔f4 (45 ♔xh6? d3, and it is Black who wins) 45...d3 46 e6+ ♔e8 47 ♔e3 d2, and in view of the exchange of the d2-pawn for one of the connected passed pawns, it is a draw.

A more refined version of the same plan is 41 b5!? (instead of 41 f4). By forcing the opponent to deal with the b-pawn, White in the meantime hopes to achieve more on the opposite wing: 41...♖b1 42 f4 ♖xb3 43 f5 (43 b6 ♖b4) 43...♖xb5 44 e6+ ♔e7.



Analysis diagram

Going for the h7-pawn – 45 ♔h6 leads to the isolation of the king: 45...gxf5 46 gxf5 ♖b3 47 ♔xh7 (47 ♔g5 ♖b5 is roughly the same as 45 h5) 47...♖g3 with a draw. 45 h5 is more interesting: 45...gxf5 46 gxf5 ♖a5 (the c5-square has to be guarded) 47 ♗f6+ (after 47 ♔h6 ♖a4 48 ♗c5+ ♔f6 49 ♔xh7 d4 it is White who has to try and draw) 47...♔e8 48 ♗g7 ♔e7 (a natural move, but 48...d4! is technically more accurate, since after 49 ♗xd4 the rook will keep the f5-pawn under fire, and White will be unable to win, even after penetrating with his king to f6) 49 ♗d4 ♖b5 50 ♔h6 (the optimal moment for the attack on

the h7-pawn) 50...♖b3 51 ♔xh7 ♖g3! (not 51...♖f3? 52 ♗c5+ ♔f6 53 ♔g8!) 52 h6 (the difference compared with the 45 ♔h6 variation is that the h-pawn is more advanced, but this is not decisive) 52...♖g5 53 ♗g7 d4 54 f6+ ♔xe6 55 ♔g8 d3 56 f7 ♖f5 57 h7 d2 58 h8♕ d1♕ 59 ♕h6+ ♔d7 60 ♗f6 ♕g4+ 61 ♕g7 ♕c4, and the draw, evidently, cannot be avoided.

The only try that remains is 36 h5 ♔f7 37 ♔g3 – after this Black replies with the typical 37...b4! (37...♔e6 38 f4 g6 39 ♔h4 is less good) 38 axb4 axb4 39 cxb4 ♖c1 40 f4 ♖b1! (40...♖d1 41 ♗c5 ♖d3+ 42 ♔h4 is dubious, for example: 42...♖xb3 – 42...♔e6!? – 43 f5 h6 44 e6+ ♔e8 45 g5! hxg5+ 46 ♔g4! ♖b1 47 h6! gxh6 48 f6 and wins) 41 f5 ♖xb3+ 42 ♔f4 ♖xb4 43 e6+ ♔g8 44 ♔e5 h6 45 ♔xd5 ♖a4! (after 45...♖b8? 46 ♗c5 ♖d8+ 47 ♔c6 the king gives decisive support to the imminent pawn breakthrough: 47...♖d1 48 ♗d6 ♖a1 49 ♔d7 ♖a7+ 50 ♗c7 ♖a8 51 g5! hxg5 52 h6 g4 53 hxg7 ♔xg7 54 ♗e5+ etc.), and if 46 g5 hxg5 47 h6 gxh6 48 f6, then, 'in the opinion' of the computer, Black forces a draw by 48...♖xd4+! 49 ♔xd4 g4 50 ♔e5 g3 51 f7+ ♔g7 52 ♔d6 g2 53 ♔e7 g1♕ 54 f8♕+ ♔h7. In a practical game, of course, a number of accurate moves would still be demanded of Black in this final position.

It stands to reason that this fascinating endgame contains many more subtleties. But in any case there is no doubt that 32...♖f8? was a decisive mistake by Korchnoi, allowing White to take the game into a purely technical stage.

33 a4!

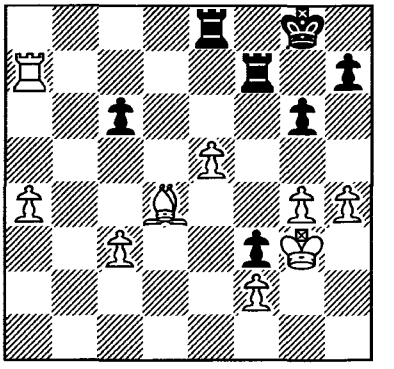
Karpov breaks up the opponent's pawn pair, condemning Black's rooks to the defence of his weak pawn islands.

33...bxa4 34 bxa4 g6 35 ♖xa5 ♖ee8

35...h5 can now be disregarded by White: 36 ♖c5! hxg4 37 a5 ♖d8 38 ♔xg4 ♖d5 39 ♖xd5 cxd5 40 ♔xf3 and wins.

36 ♖a7 (this effectively concludes the game) **36...♖f7**

White need not fear the exchange 36...♖a8 37 a5 ♖xa7 38 ♗xa7: too many of his pawns dream of becoming a queen.



37 ♖a6! (again denying the black rooks any hopes of activity) **37...♖c7 38 ♗c5 ♖cc8 39 ♗d6 ♖a8 40 ♖xc6 ♖xa4 41 ♔xf3 h5 42 gxh5**

The sealed move. The three pawns for the exchange, plus active pieces, do not leave the opponent any chances of saving the game, especially after adjournment analysis.

On the day for adjournments, first the challenger unexpectedly lost the 13th game (see above). 'Korchnoi was shocked,' Karpov recalls. 'After all, within half an hour he faced a second resumption – and a second successive defeat... I thought that he wouldn't turn up for this resumption, but he arrived, probably in order to demonstrate that he could calmly accept this blow of fate. He even smiled. I can imagine what this smile must have cost him.'

42...gxh5 43 c4 ♖a2 44 ♖b6 ♔f7 45 c5 ♖a4 46 c6 ♔e6 47 c7 ♔d7 48 ♖b8 ♖c8 49 ♔e3! ♖xh4 50 e6+! 1-0

Black resigned: 50...♔xd6 51 ♖xc8 ♖c4 52 ♖d8+! ♔xc7 53 e7 or 50...♔xe6 51 ♗g3!

The score became 3-1 in the champion's favour. And he decided to 'let his rearguard catch up' and accustom himself to the new situation in the match: 'I did not force events, but continued playing as though nothing had happened, confident that the rising wave in

me would sweep away the opponent with its logical strength. Which is what happened in the 17th game.'

To be fair, it should be mentioned that at the very start of this incredibly dramatic and entertaining game Korchnoi lost 11 minutes on his clock in the battle with Zukhar (cf. p.121) and then achieved a completely won position by energetic play. And that evening the 'rising wave' could have covered Karpov himself 'with its logical strength'...

Before analysing this game let us try to understand what the Doctor of Medical Sciences Vladimir Petrovich Zukhar was doing in Baguio. After all, initially his task was merely to ensure that Karpov slept well and to give him psychological advice. Alexander Roshal recalls:

'Korchnoi has always been noted for his mistrustfulness, and he believed in parapsychology and all kinds of mysticism (later he even played a game with... Maróczy's spirit). From the very start in Baguio, when Zukhar had not yet begun to enjoy himself, Viktor Lvovich complained: "They've brought a secret psychologist with them!" He must have remembered Zukhar from the Moscow match. In short, as soon as Korchnoi gave grounds for thinking that he was afraid of hypnosis, this was immediately exploited. We knew perfectly well that Zukhar was no hypnotist, but we decided: if that's what the opponent wants, by all means! And the doctor himself became so carried away by his role, that he soon began to regard himself as virtually the main participant in the events. Before the games he did not have soup and did not drink water, so that he could then sit continuously for the full five hours at his "battle station" on the 4th row. I don't know exactly whether this was on Baturinsky's instructions or his own initiative.

'The ways that the challenger's team tried to combat our psychologist! Petra Leeuwerik sat herself directly in front of him, blocking his vision. Then Zukhar began asking us, Krylov or the "art critics in civilian clothes" *(KGB officials – G.K.)* to move Petra somewhere. Once she sat almost in his lap and Tal immediately commented: "Now he is Vladimir Petrovich!"

'Psychologists are strange people: when they are constantly talked about, they begin to believe in the exclusive importance of their mission. During one of the lengthy time-outs we were all invited to another reception, and a local compere announced: "Among our guests is Anatoly Karpov's team. Present here with them is the famous..." He was probably intending to name Tal, who was well known even in the Philippines. But here, not allowing him to finish, Zukhar suddenly stood up and bowed...

'Some time later from Korchnoi's camp they announced: "Well, just you wait: soon a person will arrive, and he'll hypnotise everyone." However, it did not prove very difficult for the Soviets to disarm our emigrant from Kharkov, this amateur "hypnotist", who, clearly, would undertake any work... This was a psychological war. Initially we regarded it as a rather amusing game. I, for example, permitted myself a dubious joke about this "little Jew". But then these games acquired more threatening dimensions.'

...So, after winning the fierce battle to have Zukhar moved, the challenger finally made his first move, and promptly the champion emerged from his rest room.

Game 76
V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov
World Championship Match,
Baguio 1978, 17th game
Nimzo-Indian Defence E47

1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 d4 ♗b4 4 e3 0-0 (avoiding 4...c5 5 ♘e2!? *Game No.29*) **5 ♗d3 c5 6 d5!?**

Korchnoi called this new, sharp move 'an interesting idea of Yacob Murey'. Usually 6 ♘f3 or 6 ♘e2 was played.

6...b5!?

Black replies as in the 7th game, where 'this

pawn sacrifice came as a surprise and proved fully justified from the practical point of view.' (Karpov)

7 dxe6 fxe6 (in Karpov's opinion, 7...bxc4 8 exf7+ ♔h8 9 ♗xc4 d5 is even better) **8 cxb5 a6!?**

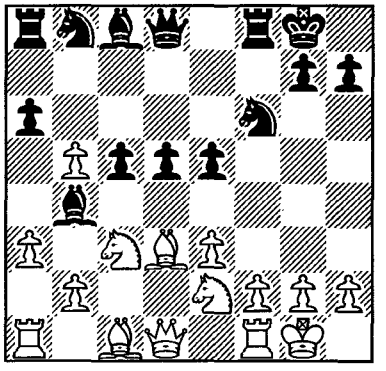
And this is a novelty. Apparently the champion was dissatisfied with the outcome of the opening in the 7th game, where he first set up a mobile pawn centre: 8...♗b7 9 ♘f3 d5 10 0-0 ♘bd7 11 ♘e2! ♕e8 12 ♘g3 e5 (12...c4!? 13 ♗c2 ♘c5) 13 ♗f5 g6 14 ♗h3 a6?! 15 ♘g5! axb5 (if 15...♗a5 or 15...♕e7, then 16 e4! is strong) 16 ♘e6 c4 17 ♗d2!, and White won the exchange, but... not the game.

9 ♘e2 d5 10 0-0 e5

10...axb5 11 ♗xb5 ♗a6 12 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 was possibly more promising, but as a matter of principle Karpov does not want for the moment to determine the position of his bishop.

11 a3

The first critical moment.



11...axb5?!

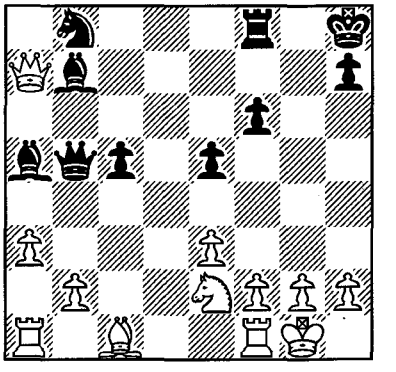
'It was better to choose between 11...♗a5 and 11...♗xc3.' (Tal). If 11...♗a5?! the counter-sacrifice 12 b4!, disclosing the weakness of the enemy centre, is good: 12...cxb4 13 axb4 ♗xb4 14 ♕b3 ♗xc3 15 ♘xc3 ♗b7 16 e4! etc. But 11...♗xc3! (now, in order to exclude the reply 12 bxc3) could indeed have equalised: 12 ♘xc3 c4 13 ♗e2 (13 ♗c2 d4) 13...axb5 14 ♘xb5 ♗a6 15 ♘c3 (15 ♕a4 ♘bd7 or 15...♘c6) 15...d4 16 exd4 exd4 17 ♗f3 ♖a7 18 ♘e2 ♖d7 with fine counterplay.

12 ♗xb5 ♗xc3

A difficult choice. It sometimes happens that in analysis you come to one conclusion, but during a game you begin to have doubts, and new variations creep into your mind. You change the planned course, and afterwards you reproach yourself: 'What have I done?' That was the case here: it was recommended to Karpov that he should retain the bishop, but thinking at the board led him in a different direction. Why?

'If 12...♗e6 there is the unpleasant reply 13 ♘a4, while 12...c4 does not work in view of 13 e4, and Black's position collapses. In the event of 12...♗a5 (Tal) White plays 13 ♗d2, creating the threat of b2-b4, after which the opening of the a-file is now in favour of White' (Karpov). For example: 13...♗a6 14 b4! cxb4 15 axb4 ♗xb4 16 ♕b3 ♗c5 17 ♖fd1 or 17 ♖fc1, and Black's hanging centre is on the point of collapse.

As for 12...♕b6, Karpov rejected this because of 13 ♗d3 c4? 14 ♘xd5, although after 13...♗xc3 14 ♘xc3 ♗e6! Black would have gained compensation for the pawn, while 14 bxc3 would not have been so favourable for White as in the game. In fact 12...♕b6? would have been refuted combinatively, which the champion also saw, but... not to the end: 13 ♘xd5! ♕xb5 14 ♘xf6+ gxf6 15 ♕d5+ ♔h8 16 ♕xa8 ♗b7 17 ♕a7 ♗a5!

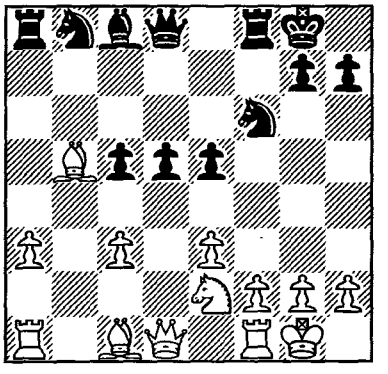


Analysis diagram

And here, instead of the pretty variation given by Karpov – 18 ♘c3 ♗xc3 19 bxc3 ♗xg2! 20 ♔xg2 ♖g8+ or 18 a4 ♕c6 19 f3 ♗b6 and wins, there is 18 b4!, sharply changing the evaluation of the position: 18...♕c6? 19 f3 ♗b6 does not work because of 20 b5!, while in the event of 18...cxb4 19 axb4 ♗xg2 20 ♕c5! ♕xc5 21 bxc5 ♗xf1 22 ♔xf1 ♘c6 (22...♗b4 23 ♗a3) 23 e4 or 18...♘d7 19 ♘c3! ♕c6 20 e4 ♖a8 21 ♕xa8 ♗xa8 22 bxa5 White should be able to convert his material advantage.

13 bxc3!

Karpov does not like pawn defects and so, even in calculations 'for his opponent', he clearly underestimated this capture with the pawn. Now Black's pawn trio loses its mobility and he has to seek some other compensation for the sacrificed pawn. But this is not easy, since he has no lead in development and the bishop at b5 paralyses his counterplay on the queenside.



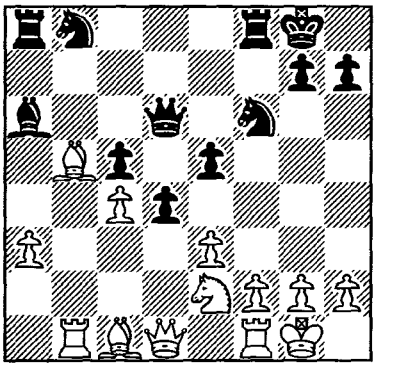
13...♗a6?!

Black agrees to the exchange of the light-squared bishops, reckoning that White's other bishop will be cramped and that it will somehow be possible to exploit this. '13...♗b7 was possibly better', but not 13...c4?! 14 a4 ♗a6 15 ♗a3 ♖f7 16 f4! ♕b6 (Karpov) 17 ♕d2! with an obvious advantage to White.

14 ♖b1 ♕d6

'If 14...♘bd7, then 15 e4 ♗xb5 16 ♖xb5 followed by a3-a4, ♗a3 and f2-f4.' (Karpov). In addition, Black would have had to reckon with 15 ♗c6!?

15 c4 d4



16 ♘g3!

The immediate 16 f4 looked tempting. After this Karpov was intending to reply 16...♘c6, not seeing that after 17 fxe5 ♘xe5 18 exd4 ♘xc4 19 ♕d3! Black would stand badly: 19...♘e5 20 ♗f4 ♘xd3 21 ♗xd6 ♖fc8 22 a4 c4 23 ♘c3 etc. '16...♗b7 probably came into consideration', although this too favours White: 17 fxe5 ♕xe5 18 ♘g3 ♘c6 (18...dxe3 19 ♖b3) 19 ♗a4! etc.

There only remains 16...d3! According to Karpov, after 17 ♘g3 exf4 (*? – G.K.*) 18 ♖xf4 'White has some advantage'. But in my opinion he has practically a winning position: 18...♖d8 19 ♘f5! ♕e6 20 ♗xa6 ♘xa6 21 ♘xg7!, or 18...♗xb5 19 ♖xb5 ♘c6 (19...g6 20 ♖b3) 20 ♘f5 etc. Of course, 17...e4 is essential. Or 17 ♘c3 e4, and if 18 g4, then 18...c4! with a complicated game.

16...♘c6 17 a4!

After the 'greedy' 17 ♘f5 ♕e6 18 ♗xc6 ♕xf5 19 e4! (19 ♗xa8? ♕xb1 Karpov) 19...♕e6! 20 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 and 21...♗xc4 Black's pair of connected passed pawns could well have compensated for the exchange deficit.

17...♘a5?

A significant loss of time. 'The planned play against the c4-pawn does not succeed. Possibly the bishop should have been withdrawn –

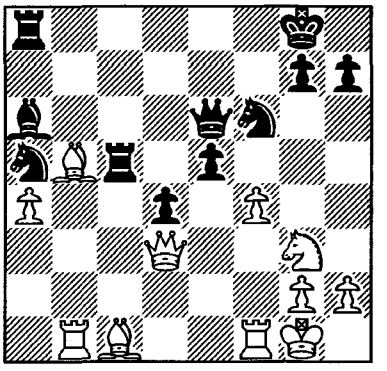
17...♗b7.' (Karpov). This too would not have promised Black an easy life, but at any event some playing intrigue would have been retained.

18 ♕d3 ♕e6 19 exd4! cxd4 (19...exd4 20 ♗a3 or 19...♗xb5 20 cxb5 exd4 21 ♗g5 is also unsatisfactory) **20 c5 ♖fc8 21 f4!**

This destroys Black's hopes for his central pawns. Now White adds a powerful initiative to his material advantage.

21...♖xc5

'It is obvious that I have lost the strategic battle. All that remains is to rely on my resourcefulness in defence and to seek tactical chances.' (Karpov)



22 ♗xa6!

The shortest way, although White would also have gained a decisive advantage after 22 fxe5 ♗xb5 (22...♖xe5? 23 ♗xa6 and ♖b8+) 23 axb5 ♖xe5 24 ♕xd4 (24 b6 Karpov) 24...♖d5 25 ♕f4 or 23...♕xe5 24 ♘f5! (24 ♗d2 Karpov; 24 ♗b2!?) 24...♘g4 (24...♖d8 25 ♗d2) 25 g3, and if 25...♖f8 there is the pretty stroke 26 ♗f4! ♕f6 (26...♕xf5? 27 ♗d6!) 27 ♘xd4 ♖d5 28 ♗c7! ♕xd4+ 29 ♕xd4 ♖xf1+ 30 ♖xf1 ♖xd4 31 ♗xa5 and wins.

22...♕xa6 23 ♕xa6?!

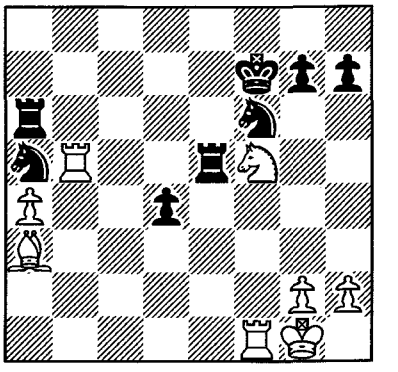
To his misfortune, Korchnoi decided to play not for an attack, but for a technically won endgame. After 23 ♖b8+! ♔f7 24 ♖b5! with the threat of fxe5 Black would have had no defence: 24...exf4 25 ♘e4 ♖c6 26 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 27 ♕xh7 ♘c6 28 ♖f5!, or 24...♖c3 25 ♕f5 ♖xg3 (what else?) 26 fxe5! ♖g6 27 exf6 gxf6 (27...♖xf6 28 ♕d7+) 28 ♗g5!, paralysing the opponent's army.

23...♖xa6 24 ♗a3 (this bishop, which has no opponent, is destined to play an enormous role in the course of the subsequent battle) **24...♖d5 25 ♘f5! ♔f7**

Black would hardly have had any more hopes after 25...♘c6 26 fxe5 ♖xe5 27 ♖b7, and if 27...♖a7, then 28 ♖b6!, for example: 28...♘d8 (28...♖e6 or 28...♖xa4 – 29 ♗d6!) 29 ♖b8 ♖d7 30 ♘xd4! ♖xd4 31 ♗b2 ♖ed5 32 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 33 a5 ♔f7 34 a6 ♖d7 35 a7 ♖xa7 36 ♖xd8 and wins.

26 fxe5 ♖xe5 27 ♖b5

'The pawn capture 27 ♘xd4 would have led to a lessening of the tension and a drawn outcome after 27...♘c4.' (Karpov). However, after 28 ♖b7+! no draw is apparent: 28...♔g6 29 ♗f8 ♘e8 30 ♖b4, or 28...♔e8 29 ♗b4 ♖xa4 30 ♘f5 ♔d8 31 ♗c3 and ♖xg7 with an extra pawn and the initiative, while if 28...♔g8, then 29 ♗e7 ♖xa4 30 ♗xf6 gxf6 31 ♘f5 ♘d2 32 ♖c1!, and the '7th rank absolute' (Nimzowitsch) is bound to win for White.



27...♘c4!?

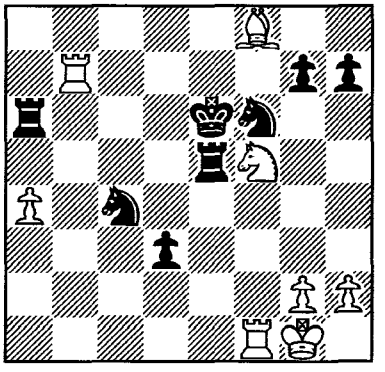
'In his preliminary calculations Korchnoi overlooked this move. Of course, White was hoping for the exchange of rooks' (Karpov): 27...♖xb5 28 axb5 ♖a8(e6) 29 ♘xd4 and wins. 27...♖e2 was slightly better, but also insufficient: 28 ♗b2 (evidently, not the only way) 28...d3 29 ♗c3 ♘c4 30 ♖b7+ ♔f8 31 ♖xg7

d2 32 ♖c7 ♖e4 33 a5! ♖f4! 34 ♖b1 ♘e8 35 ♖c8 ♔f7 36 g3! ♖e4 37 ♖f1 ♘f6 38 ♖c5 and wins.

28 ♖b7+ (28 ♘d6+? ♖xd6) **28...♔e6** (there is nothing else) **29 ♘xd4+**

In order to come to this pragmatic decision, Korchnoi spent nearly all his remaining time, but he couldn't bring himself to make either of the two sharp bishop moves, which also promised a win:

1) 29 ♗f8!? d3!, and indeed, such a complicated position can probably be resolved only with the help of a computer.



Analysis diagram

In time-trouble it is only ultra-fine intuition or recklessness that would push a player along this path: 30 ♘d4+! ♔d5 31 ♗xg7 ♔xd4 32 ♖xf6! ♖xf6 33 ♗xf6 d2 34 ♖b1 ♔d3 35 ♗xe5 ♘xe5 36 a5 ♔c2 37 ♖a1 d1♕+ 38 ♖xd1 ♔xd1 39 a6 ♘c6 40 ♔f2 ♔d2 41 ♔f3 ♔d3 42 ♔f4 ♔c4 (42...♔e2 43 g4 ♔f2 44 h4 etc.) 43 ♔g5 ♔b5 44 ♔h6 ♔xa6 45 ♔xh7, and the machine announces mate in 24 moves(!);

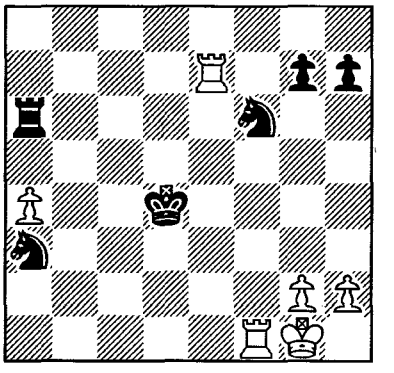
2) 29 ♗b4!? This would also have demanded considerable accuracy of White: 29...♘e3 30 ♘xd4+ ♔d5 31 ♘f3! ♖e8 32 ♖b5+ ♔e4 33 ♖a1, or 29...♔d5 30 ♖b5+ ♔e4 31 ♘g3+ ♔d3 32 ♖d1+ ♔c2 33 ♖xd4 ♖xb5 34 axb5 ♖a1+ 35 ♔f2 ♔b3 36 ♗e1 ♖a2+ 37 ♘e2 with an extra pawn and a technically won position.

29...♔d5 30 ♘f3?

Time-trouble moves can be criticised only for the sake of establishing the truth. The flamboyant 30 ♗f8!? ♔xd4 31 ♗xg7 looks risky, although White regains with interest the temporary piece sacrifice: 31...♖ee6 32 ♖f7 ♔e5 33 g4! ♖xa4 34 g5, or 31...♘d5 32 ♖d1+! ♔e4 33 ♗xe5, winning the h-pawn and retaining the a-pawn.

On the other hand, the accurate 30 ♘c2 ♖xa4 31 ♗f8! would have allowed White to convert his advantage without particular risk: 31...♘e8 32 ♘b4+! ♔e4 33 ♘c6! with a decisive attack, or 31...♖e8 32 ♗xg7 ♘e4 (32...♔c6 33 ♖b4! ♖xb4 34 ♘xb4+ ♔b5 35 ♖xf6 ♔xb4 36 ♖h6 etc.) 33 ♖d1+ ♔c6 34 ♖dd7 ♘a5 35 ♖bc7+ ♔b5 36 ♗d4, and Black cannot hold out.

30...♘xa3 31 ♘xe5 ♔xe5 32 ♖e7+ ♔d4



33 ♖xg7?!

Korchnoi aims to leave Black without any pawns, hoping that his rook and pair of knights will be unable to cope with White's passed pawns, supported by his active rooks. He does not yet see any danger for himself, otherwise he would first have played 33 ♖f4+!, driving back the black king, and only after 33...♔d5(c5) – 34 ♖xg7 with chances of success.

33...♘c4 34 ♖f4+ ♘e4!?

'To all appearances, Black could have gained a draw even after 34...♔d3, but then 35 ♖f7, and in the end the h-pawn has to be ex-

changed for the a-pawn. It was better to do this immediately, but on the other hand another piece is activated.' (Karpov)

I think that if 34...♔d3, then 35 h3! is stronger, for the moment not giving up the a-pawn: 35...♘e3?! 36 a5! ♘fd5 37 ♖a4, or 35...♘d5 36 ♖d7! ♘e3 37 ♔f2, and the draw is still a long way off.

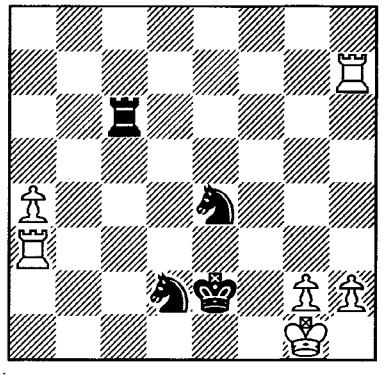
35 ♖d7+! (after 35 ♖xh7 ♖xa4 36 h4 ♔e5 37 ♖f8 ♘e3 Black would have managed to defend) **35...♔e3?!**

Karpov takes a chance! The cautious 35...♔e5 would have allowed him to dream only of a draw after 36 g3 ♘cd6 (36...♖xa4? 37 ♖e7+) 37 ♖xh7 ♖xa4 38 ♖e7+ ♔d5 39 g4 ♖a1+ 40 ♖f1.

36 ♖f3+ ♔e2 37 ♖xh7?

How could White not take the pawn, with his flag about to fall? But 37 ♖e7! ♘cd2 38 ♖a3 was much stronger, with the intention of a4-a5 and h2-h3. Black, deprived of counterplay (38...♖c6 39 ♖a1! or 38...♖a5 39 ♖a2!), would have had to try and save his h-pawn and conduct a difficult struggle for a draw.

37...♘cd2?! (again risking a practical chance in the opponent's time-trouble, instead of the simple 37...♖xa4 with equality) **38 ♖a3?!** (the cool-headed 38 ♖ff7! ♖xa4 – not 38...♖c6? 39 h4! – 39 ♖a7 ♖c4 40 ♖a1 would again have forced Black to fight for a draw) **38...♖c6!**



39 ♖a1??

39 h4?? was also suicidal: 39...♖a1+ 40 ♔h2 ♘f1+ 41 ♔h3 ♘f2 mate. Only the advance of the g-pawn would have given a draw: 39 g4! (39 g3 is also possible) 39...♘f3+ 40 ♔g2 ♘e1+ 41 ♔g1 ♖c1 42 ♖a2+ ♔f3 43 ♖f7+, but Korchnoi had no time to suspect any insidiousness on the part of his opponent, and he quickly made a move prepared beforehand.

39...♘f3+! 0-1

In time-trouble it is easy to miss such a stunning blow. White resigned: 40 gxf3 ♖g6+ 41 ♔h1 ♘f2 mate, or 40 ♔h1 ♘f2 mate. Thunderous applause broke out in the hall: some Soviet tourists had arrived for that week.

Karpov: 'My two knights mated the enemy king in the endgame – such a thing had never before happened in a match for the world championship! After signing the score-sheet, Korchnoi went up to the demonstration board and stared at it for several minutes, as if trying to comprehend what exactly had happened.'

After this shock the challenger travelled to Manila, and took two time-outs, one after another. Karpov: 'To be frank, I suspect that Korchnoi was endeavouring not to have to play in the presence of the Soviet tourists (someone even reported his words to me: "I will not afford them this pleasure any more.") The administration of the Terrace Plaza Hotel arranged a celebration to mark my fourth win. I had to eat the white king, made out of cream, from a cake with four candles at the corners of a "tasty" chessboard, depicting the final position from the 17th game.'

That same evening, 26th August, the birthday of Roshal, the Soviet delegation's press attaché, was also celebrated, and Edmondson, a 'neutral' member of the jury, made a toast: 'We live in a divided world: continents drift apart, religions clash, families break up... But chess, by contrast, unites us and joins separated continents together. To those who serve it! To you, dear Alex!' A quarter of a century later Roshal was to say: 'Alas, like many of my colleagues, I cannot completely agree with this compliment or consider myself a "dove of peace". War is war...'

Soon a report arrived from Manila: Korchnoi was demanding the removal of the Soviet psychologist from the stalls and the installation of a glass screen between the auditorium and the stage, otherwise he would refuse to continue. The match was on the verge of collapse. Baturinsky recalls that the same evening Karpov said to him: 'I must win the match, play it out to the end, despite all of Korchnoi's tricks. Think up an acceptable form of compromise, which would meet this aim.' This was how the well-known Baturinsky-Keene 'gentlemen's agreement' arose, and after a week's break the match was renewed.

Baturinsky: 'The period between the 18th and 26th games can safely be called the days of Karpov's missed opportunities. He lost the 21st game and did not score a single win, although he was close to victory in the 18th, 20th, 22nd and 25th – and he could easily have concluded the match, even if he had only won two of them. In almost every one of these games the world champion committed the same stereotyped mistake: after achieving a great advantage by excellent play and with a sufficient reserve of time, he displayed inexplicable haste and wasted all his chances. For example, in the 22nd game it would have been simplest for him to seal 41 ♖xd6 – Tal thinks that Black would have resigned without resuming. But Karpov made this move on the board and continued playing rapidly; when the game was adjourned seven moves later there was no longer a win. In such cases the champion's trainers and friends in the auditorium wanted to shout: "Tolya, stop!" Alas, this was not possible... Karpov explains such "slips" by his childhood habit of playing quickly. On growing up, he tried to rid himself of it, but he has not always succeeded. It would seem that there is also another reason: at moments of greatest tension, unavoidable when playing at such a level, one's inhibiting reflexes sometimes do not work.'

After the 22nd game Karpov was especially upset: 'Why didn't I stop immediately after the time control? But I got wound up: he moves – I move, he moves – I move... When I came to, my net was empty. That's when I found myself unable to sleep! And for the first time in the match I turned to Zukhar for help. It is not defeats that not distress you, so much as missed opportunities... I was in torment for half the night and then I summoned Zukhar. He tried his sorcery on me – in vain. The next day I walked about like a zombie, and that night I did not tempt fate, but asked Zukhar to immediately get down to business. And again all to no purpose. And pills were taboo for me – chess does not condone them... I racked my brains and still couldn't understand: why, why, why couldn't I exploit my obvious playing advantage?!'

Although the champion won the 27th game and the score now became 5-2, this did not improve his condition. 'Everything that could burn in me had already burned out... There remained only one, last step, but I did not know, I did not imagine, at that moment I did not see how to make it.'

And here the real drama began for Karpov: he lost the 28th and 29th games and, after a draw in the 30th, also the 31st (this psychological fatigue is very familiar to me, piling up when the goal is very close: in our 1986 return match, when also leading 'plus three', I contrived to lose three games in a row). To the astonishment of the entire chess world, the score became 5-5.

What happened just before the decisive 32nd game is described in the chapter 'Baguio through the Eyes of Korchnoi'.

Karpov: 'Do you know what distinguishes a competitor from a non-competitor? If a non-competitor loses successive games, he goes to pieces and gives up, whereas a competitor continues moving forward, because he knows that the bad run will somewhere come to an end, and things will improve. I sensed that Korchnoi's wave had already passed, and that mine was again beginning to rise.... On another occasion after such a trip *(to Manila, dur-*

ing the time-out – G.K.) I would have been dead tired, but here it was as though I had bathed in the water of life. For the 32nd game I arrived calm and confident. Korchnoi barely looked at me – and that was enough. When week after week you see one and the same person in front of you, you can guess his condition and mood from the first glance. And Korchnoi realised everything; even earlier than me he realised that this game would be the last. I read this in his momentary glance, after which he immediately looked away. I conducted this game in the way that I would always like to play: calmly, without emotions, easily and naturally.'

Unfortunately, the media coverage of the historic 32nd game was amazingly superficial and one-sided. Apparently it was affected by the enormous political importance of its result, and also the extraordinarily nervous match situation and the extreme fatigue of all the participants in this event, including the commentators. I hope that I have succeeded in filling the resulting gap.

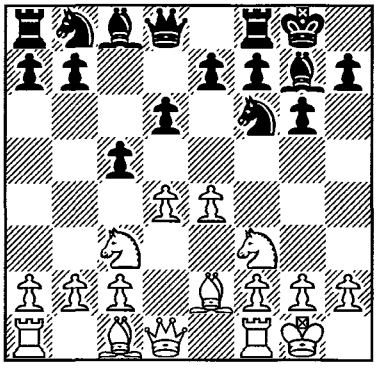
Game 77

A.Karpov-V.Korchnoi

World Championship Match, Baguio 1978, 32nd game

Schmid Benoni A43

1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 ♘f3 ♗g7 5 ♗e2 0-0 6 0-0 c5



A rare move. 'Korchnoi is faithful to his favourite tactics – of changing the opening patterns as often as possible.' (Karpov). The 18th game went 6...♗g4 7 ♗e3 ♘c6 (cf. *Game No.73*).

The choice of opening at the finish of a lengthy match, especially with Black, is not an easy matter. Your nerves are already frayed, and everything that you have played earlier seems full of flaws. You want something new, but at the same time also solid and slightly puzzling. According to grandmaster Panno, who helped Korchnoi in this match, they wanted 'to choose something rather complicated, especially taking account of the champion's psychological condition.' One can only guess who convinced him to play 6...c5 (although it is known that Keene and Torre had played in similar vein). But the choice proved unfortunate for Korchnoi, and they also guessed wrong about Karpov's psychological condition.

7 d5

Instantly taking play from a Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence into a well known Indian set-up: the so-called Schmid-Tal Benoni, which had already occurred in Karpov's games. It is amusing that the first 'mainstay' of the variation was the chief arbiter at the match (true, by that time he had left Baguio) and the second was one of the champion's helpers...

Korchnoi was expecting 7 dxc5 dxc5 8 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 9 ♗e3 b6 10 ♖fd1, since theory judged this variation to be slightly favourable for White. Karpov: 'But I realised that the opponent could have prepared an improvement, and I avoided the exchange of pawns.' Indeed, soon after the match one of Korchnoi's seconds demonstrated a new move, which solved Black's opening problems: 10...♘c6! 11 ♖xd8+ ♘xd8 12 ♖d1 ♗b7 (Andersson-Stean, Munich 1979).

Korchnoi was shocked: 'I had analysed this move for many days, counting on the psychological effect of its novelty. Great was my surprise when at the critical moment Karpov

replied without thinking. He knew the move 6...c5 *(is this really so surprising for a top-class grandmaster? – G.K.)* and moreover – he was expecting its appearance on that very day!'

Once again one has to give Karpov's psychological insight its due.

7...♘a6

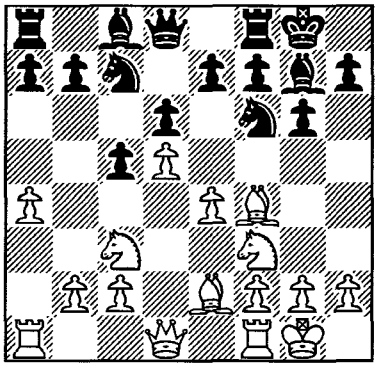
The most popular continuation. The alternative strategy involves the immediate undermining of the centre – 7...e6.

8 ♗f4

This move, inhibiting ...e7-e6, is now deemed the strongest, but at that time they often played both 8 h3 and 8 ♘d2 (*Volume 4, Game No.21*).

8...♘c7 9 a4

Useful prophylaxis. If 9 ♘d2, then 9...b5?! 10 ♘xb5 is questionable (Najdorf-Tal, Moscow 1967), but 9...♘d7 is acceptable. But if 9 ♖e1, then 9...b5! 10 ♘xb5 (10 ♗xb5 ♘h5!) 10...♘xe4 11 ♘xc7 ♕xc7 12 ♗c4 ♘f6 and Black solves his opening problems.



9...b6

One of the three main replies: Black forestalls the blockading a4-a5 and unhurriedly prepares ...b6-b5 or ...e7-e6. In the event of 9...♗g4 10 h3 ♗xf3 11 ♗xf3 ♘d7 12 ♕d2 a6 13 ♗e2 White has a slight but enduring advantage (Karpov-Browne, Madrid 1973).

9...a6!? is sharper – this possibly does not give Black full equality, but here he at least acquires some counter-chances. For example, in the game Tal-Velimirovic (Belgrade 1979) after 10 ♖e1 (currently 10 ♕d2 or 10 h3 is in fashion, but not 10 a5 ♘b5!) 10...♖b8 11 a5 (11 e5 ♘h5 is also unclear) 11...b5 12 axb6 ♖xb6 Black created piece play compensating for the weakening of his queenside.

To judge by the further course of the game, Korchnoi did not in fact come to his senses after the opponent's forceful reaction to his preparation. Thoughts crept in about traitors and spies, and in addition, in violation of all that had been agreed, in the 4th row of the auditorium the 'terrible' Dr Zukhar again appeared and fixed him with his penetrating stare. The challenger's playing mood was clearly spoiled and he began deploying the pieces 'by hand', without any clear-cut plan. And a few moves later he committed an imperceptible, but serious mistake...

10 ♖e1 ♗b7

After 10...a6 White could have played 11 h3 and carried out the same arrangement of his forces as in the game: 11...♘d7 (11...♖b8? 12 e5!) 12 ♗c4 ♖b8 13 ♕d3 (Khalifman-Ermenkov, Burgas 1994), or 11...♗b7 12 ♗c4 ♕d7 13 ♕d3 (cf. the following note).

11 ♗c4!

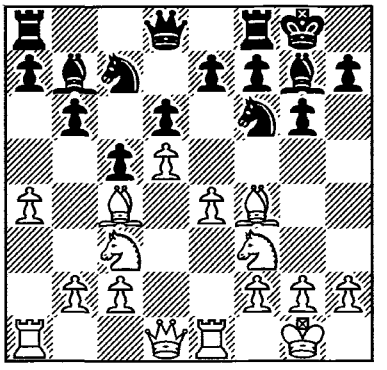
An unpleasant nuance: White immediately supports his centre, saving a tempo on h2-h3. 'The prophylactic 11 h3, with the idea of maintaining the bishop on the h2-b8 diagonal, could have proved to be a delay after 11...♕d7 12 ♗c4 ♖ad8 13 ♕d3 e5 *(or 13...e6 – G.K.)*, initiating double-edged play.' (Karpov)

However, practice has made certain corrections to this evaluation: 13 ♘b5! a6 14 ♘xc7 ♕xc7 15 ♕e2 ♕c8 16 ♖ad1 ♖fe8 17 c3, and Black is still without counterplay (Hort-Seppeur, Bundesliga 1984).

Therefore at the end of the 20th century the main debates revolved around 12...a6 13 ♕d3! (it is too early for 13 e5?! ♘h5 Sosonko-Torre, Amsterdam 1977; Beliavsky-Torre, Moscow 1981) 13...♖ad8 14 ♖ad1 ♕c8 15 ♕e3 ♖fe8, and if 16 ♗h6, then 16...e6! (Piket-Gheorghiu, Ostend 1987; Adianto-Torre, San Francisco 1991; Yusupov-Ljubojevic, Linares

1992), but in the 21st century they began playing 16 ♖d2! and ♖ed1, maintaining the threat of a bind.

The absence of h2-h3 induces Black to drive away the bishop at f4 from the key e5-square.



11...♘h5

'A loss of precious time. Instead of standing still, 11...♕d7 was necessary, aiming after 12 e5 dxe5 13 ♘xe5 ♕f5 to provoke tactical complications at any cost: 14 ♘xg6 fxg6 15 ♗xc7 ♘g4.' (Karpov). Alas, after 16 ♗g3 ♗d4 17 ♕e2 with the threat of ♘d1 the computer coldly ascertains that the complications quickly come to an end: 17...♘xf2 18 ♘b5!, or 17...♕xf2+ 18 ♗xf2 ♖xf2 19 ♔h1 ♖xe2 20 ♖xe2 ♘f2+ 21 ♖xf2 ♗xf2 22 d6+, and White wins. Therefore if 12 e5 the correct reply is 12...♘h5! with an unclear game.

'Apparently, if 11...♕d7 White should reply 12 ♕d3, retaining somewhat the better chances, but in general a very tense battle would have developed.' (Karpov). Thus after 12...a6 (or 11...a6 12 ♕d3 ♕d7) apart from the normal 13 h3 ♖ad8 14 ♖ad1 (cf. the note to White's 11th move) White has the strong 13 ♖ab1! ♖ab8 (Black has not managed to play ...♖ad8, and 13...e6?! loses a pawn) 14 b4! ♘h5 15 ♗d2 cxb4 16 ♖xb4 with the initiative. And if 12...♖ad8, then Hort's 13 ♘b5! is good, clearly consolidating White's advantage (if 13...♘h5, then 14 ♗c1).

Black's position is also not improved by 11...♘d7 12 ♕d2 etc. Therefore, in contrast to Korchnoi's next move, the criticism of 11...♘h5 seems unfounded.

12 ♗g5 ♘f6?

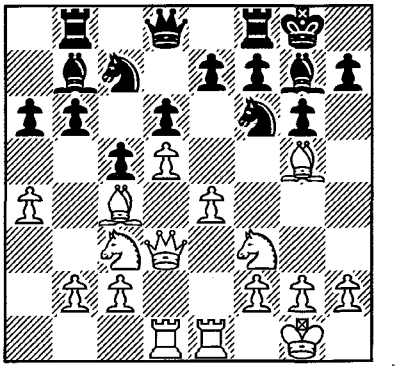
'It seems to me that on this occasion Korchnoi's predilection for solid positions served him badly,' writes Karpov... in his note to 11...♘h5. But the faultiness of Black's 12th move was remarked on neither by the winner himself, nor by Tal in *64*, nor by Filip in *Informator*, nor by many other commentators!

12...h6 was necessary, for example: 13 ♗h4 g5 14 ♘d2 ♘f4 15 ♗g3 ♘g6 16 ♘f3 a6, or 13 ♗e3 e6! 14 ♕d2 exd5 15 exd5 g5, enlivening the position at the cost of weakening the kingside. This obligatory method of defence occurred in practice at the end of the 20th century.

13 ♕d3

'Now in all directions it is much harder for Black to gain play.' (Karpov). Or more accurately – now Black is on the verge of defeat!

13...a6 14 ♖ad1 ♖b8



15 h3?!

Ultra-safe play. 'I didn't want to take a risk at this moment,' writes Karpov. 'In principle the consistent continuation, increasing White's spatial advantage and intensifying his pressure, was 15 e5!? dxe5 16 ♘xe5 etc. In another situation I would definitely have played that, but in this game there was no way that I could "sell too cheaply" and put at risk White's entire initiative.'

In fact, after 16...♕d6 17 ♕f3! ♖be8 18

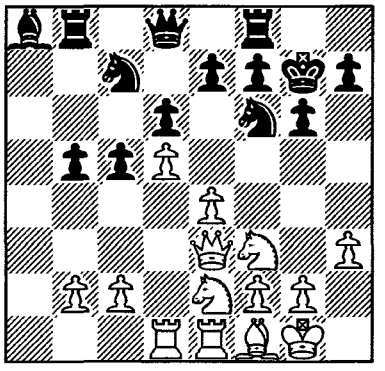
♗f4 ♕d8 19 ♘c6 ♕d7 20 ♗e5, or 16...b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♗xb5! (18 ♘xb5?! ♘cxd5 Tal) 18...♘cxd5 (18...♘xb5 19 ♕xb5 and wins) 19 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 (19...♗xd5 20 c4) 20 ♕xd5 (but not Karpov's move 20 ♕g3? because of 20...♕xg2+!) 20...♗xd5 21 c4 the game would have gone into the technical stage of converting White's enormous advantage.

Thus after 15 e5! the battle in this highly important encounter could have concluded, without having begun. Whereas the move in the game leaves White with 'only' an enduring positional advantage.

15...♘d7 16 ♕e3

'Occupying another important line and at the same time suppressing counterplay such as 16...b5 17 axb5 ♘b6.' (Karpov)

16...♗a8! 17 ♗h6 b5 (there is no other play, although without the bishop at g7 this is no longer so effective) **18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♗f1 ♘f6 20 axb5 axb5 21 ♘e2**



21...♗b7?!

The opponent's caution could have been exploited by 21...e6 22 dxe6 ♘xe6 23 ♘g3 ♕c7. Of course, this 'would have led to a serious weakening of the pawn structure' (Karpov), but Black's position would still have remained perfectly viable.

22 ♘g3 ♖a8 23 c3 ♖a4 24 ♗d3 ♕a8!?

'Disregarding White's threats. The queen moves away to the edge of the board at the moment when the storm clouds are gathering over the king's position. Perhaps Korchnoi underestimated the danger?' (Karpov). Or perhaps, on the contrary, Karpov overestimated White's threats?!

25 e5!

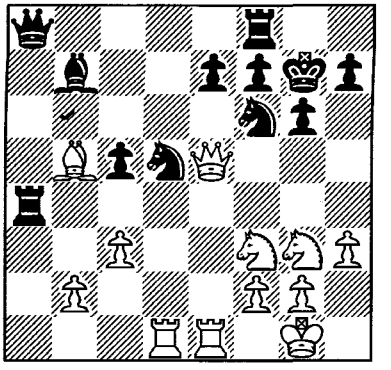
A breakthrough that has seemingly long been imminent, which Karpov called a 'dagger-blow'. In the event of 25 ♕g5 Black would have defended by 25...♔h8! 26 e5 ♘g8.

25...dxe5

25...♘fxd5? would have allowed a simple, but spectacular mate: 26 ♘h5+ gxh5 (26...♔h8 27 ♕h6 ♘e6 28 ♘g5) 27 ♕g5+ ♔h8 28 ♕h6 f5 29 ♘g5.

26 ♕xe5 ♘cxd5 27 ♗xb5

It is possible that, although not noticed by anyone, this was the culmination of the entire drama in Baguio.



27...♖a7?

'The only way of at least temporarily maintaining the material balance.' (Karpov). However, in my view 27...♖a5! 28 c4 ♕b8! was essential, activating the pieces: after 29 ♘d2 ♗a8 30 ♘b3 ♖a2 31 ♖d2 ♘c7 White has only a slight advantage.

29 ♕g5! e6! 30 cxd5 h6! 31 ♕e3 ♖xb5 32 dxe6 is more energetic, and after 32...♖e8 33 ♕c3 ♗xf3 34 exf7 ♖xe1 35 ♖xe1 ♕f4 36 gxf3 ♕d4! 37 ♘e4 ♘xe4 38 fxe4 ♕xc3 39 bxc3 ♔xf7 Black retains hopes of saving the rook ending. True, White has a move that is difficult to find: 36 ♖e5!, leading to a forced win: 36...♔xf7 (not 36...♗c6? 37 ♖f5!! or 36...♖b3? 37 f8♕+! ♔xf8 38 ♕xc5+ etc.) 37

gxf3 ♕b4 38 ♕e3! c4 (38...♕xb2 39 ♖e7+ and mate) 39 ♖e6! ♖b7 (39...♘d5 40 ♕e4) 40 ♕e5 ♘d7 41 ♕d5.

But all this is irrelevant, since instead of 32...♖e8 it is better to play 32...♗xf3! 33 ♕xf3 ♖b3, aiming to then pick up the b2-pawn and obtain an endgame with two pawns against three on the same flank (and in the event of e6-e7 to attack this breakaway pawn with all the forces). The search for a win in such a position, if there is one at all, could have taken White's last strength...

28 ♘h4! (now Black's difficulties become insuperable) **28...♗c8**

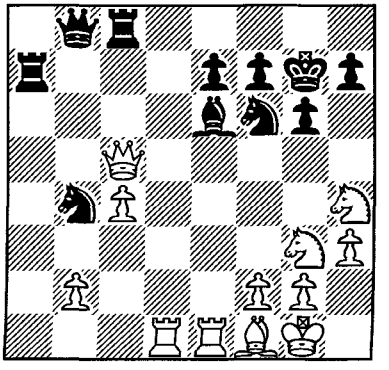
28...♗c6? is bad: 29 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 30 c4 ♘b6 31 ♖d6!! (Karpov) 31...exd6 32 ♘hf5+ or 31...♕c7 32 ♕g5! If 28...♕b8 Karpov recommends 29 c4 ♕xe5 30 ♖xe5 'with a won ending' – 30...♘c7? 31 ♖xc5, but Black replies 31...♖a5! and the win slips away. 29 ♕g5! e6 30 c4 ♘c7 31 ♖d6! is correct, with an overwhelming advantage.

29 ♗e2

'It has to be agreed that there is something attractive about this move.' (Karpov). I prefer centralisation: 29 ♘e4 ♘c7 30 ♗d3 ♘e6 31 ♘xc5 etc.

29...♗e6 30 c4 ♘b4 31 ♕xc5 ♕b8 32 ♗f1 ♖c8?!

The obligatory 32...h6 would also have been unlikely to save Black. Korchnoi was in time-trouble and no doubt realised at heart that the game was already lost.



33 ♕g5 ♔h8 34 ♖d2 ♘c6 35 ♕h6 ♖g8 (an unaesthetic move; 35...♘g8 36 ♕e3 ♘f6 was slightly better) **36 ♘f3 ♕f8 37 ♕e3 ♔g7?!**

37...♖b7 (Karpov) 38 ♘g5 ♗d7 was more tenacious, but Black had only a few seconds left on his clock.

38 ♘g5 ♗d7 39 b4 ♕a8 40 b5 ♘a5 41 b6 ♖b7 1-0

The sealed move. The following day Keene informed the arbiter Filip that Black was resigning the game without resuming.

By winning this unforgettable match by a score of 6-5 (with 21 draws), Karpov retained his title of world champion.

But what would have happened in the event of him losing? Ten years later, already in the era of perestroika and glasnost, Mikhail Tal, appearing on television, was to say with a smile: 'We could not imagine the consequences if an anti-Soviet player, not a Soviet, had become world champion. It is possible that then chess would have been declared a pseudo-science.' Later he bumped into Korchnoi at the Olympiad in Novi Sad (1990), and in reply to reproaches 'regarding the behaviour of the Soviets' he suddenly said to him in an apologetic tone: 'There, in Baguio, we were all afraid for you – if you had won the match, you could have been physically eliminated. Everything had been prepared for this ...'

And Korchnoi seizes on this version in his most recent interviews: 'I did not deliberately lose the match in Baguio, but if I had won it, everything had been prepared for my elimination! In his time, Roshal apparently signed an obligation to "keep secret for ever", but Tal, who did not sign anything, told me about this directly to my face! I repeat: I did not deliberately lose this match. But some higher forces did not allow me to win it.'

But this is how Alexander Roshal commented on this conflict in autumn 2005:

'Throughout my long life in chess I have not met one single top player who was not

wary and suspicious. Not one! These traits – wariness and suspicion, produced by constant rivalry, help to preserve opening secrets, and induce you to be friendly only with those who are not dangerous, who will not betray you, not inflict psychological trauma, and so on. The suspiciousness of other great players reached hypochondriac, and sometimes even manic proportions.

'I remember how in the summer of 1974, not long before the first Karpov-Korchnoi match, after arriving at the Olympiad in Nice I entered the enormous playing hall together with Korchnoi's wife Bella. Karpov was sitting a long way from us, on a platform, and later he suddenly asked me: "What were you talking about for 35 minutes with Korchnoi's wife?" Just think: during a game, at a distance of a hundred metres from us, he noted the time of our conversation! He needed to be sure of whether I was with him or with Korchnoi. But I was on good terms with both of them (and quite recently Viktor presented me with a copy of his book with the inscription: 'To my friend-cum-enemy').

'Korchnoi suffered even more from suspiciousness. Once Tal said jokingly to me: "You have a persecution mania, which periodically turns into megalomania and back again." But, in my opinion, something similar used to happen with Korchnoi. This was a continuous process: he lost – oh, oh, I have been betrayed, there are spies all around; he won – I am indeed the greatest!

'On learning from Tal about their meeting in Novi Sad and that in Baguio we were supposedly afraid for Korchnoi's life, I was annoyed: "Misha, why did you have to make a joke like that with *him*? Do you know *who* you are joking with?" Tal replied: "So what – now it is probably pleasant for him to hear this.' But you have to know Korchnoi: any joke that concerns him, he takes seriously! And, being mistrustful and inclined towards mysticism, he is always looking for a needle in a haystack – when it isn't there.

'To judge by his interview, Viktor obviously overestimates how informed I was about non-chess questions: I didn't know anything about a threat to his life! And I reject all the rumours about "preparations for his elimination in Baguio" as being absurd and far from the truth. The reality was this: in the event of Karpov losing, a return match would have taken place within a year, and the Soviet Union would have made every effort to ensure that Tolya regained the chess crown for the country.

'And besides, why should we have been afraid for Korchnoi?! Rather we should have been afraid for ourselves! When the score became 5-5, I went down with high blood pressure, and Zukhar, Balashov and Zaitsev came to my room. The psychologist said: "I am now going to count to seventeen – when you wake up, all will be well." He counted so tediously and unpleasantly, that I did indeed become drowsy. Then I asked: "Has Zukhar gone?" The trainers said: "He's gone. But don't worry – we have something prepared." And I replied to them: "With your preparations we'll most likely end up felling trees." I knew about this not just by hearsay. I remember how similar black jokes were also cracked by the experienced Baturinsky. But, fortunately, Tolya won.'

The 'black jokes' of Roshal and Baturinsky require an explanation: in Stalinist times the parents of the former were subjected to repression, while the latter served as a military procurator for many years, and retired holding the rank of colonel of justice.

Also of great interest, but from the purely chess point of view, are the exclusive comments of Igor Zaitsev:

'I have heard the most varied stories about the 32nd game, some of them quite fantastic. As an eye-witness, who sat through the entire match in the auditorium, I should also like to express my opinion.

'I will begin a long way back. It seems to me that Korchnoi derived a great benefit from his defeat against Spassky in the final Candi-

dates match in 1968. I don't know how and on what he began working at that time, but from a certain moment his play became more dynamic, and his strategic ideas became more complete and polished. It was the strategic component that became the leading feature of Korchnoi's play. Therefore, in contrast to other contenders for the crown, he could easily replace one opening with another – despite his considerable age! The point is that, as they grow older, the overwhelming majority of players become strongly accustomed to the central structure typical of each opening, and to switch from one structure to another becomes painful...

'In view of this, one could always expect Korchnoi to employ variations where the process of forming the pawn structure is varied and stretched out over a period of time. For example, this happens in the English Opening (one of Korchnoi's most effective opening weapons) or the Alekhine Defence (which was also in his arsenal at one time). Also in keeping with these set-ups is the flexible Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence. Therefore Korchnoi's decision to choose this particular opening at the most important moment in the match is not something that I consider "sensational" or "short-sighted", but rather fully expected and in accordance with his chess portrait.

'Firstly, Korchnoi had already played this defence twice against Karpov – at the Interzonal tournament in Leningrad (1973) and in the 18th game of the match in Baguio, and both times it had all turned out well for Black. Secondly, Keene, the challenger's second, had also played this against Karpov – at the European Team Championship in Moscow (1977), and although he lost, he was nevertheless able to provoke double-edged complications. And this could have drawn the attention of Korchnoi, who at the finish was aiming to build on his success. Besides, the manner in which Karpov plays this opening – one and the same solid, unhurried set-up – apparently not only did not frighten Korchnoi, but, on the contrary, even to some extent suited him, as he had clearly summoned up his courage. An indirect confirmation of these conclusions is Karpov's only loss in his triumphant 50th USSR Championship (1983), which he suffered with White against Azmaiparashvili precisely in the Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence.

'Of course, the Pirc with 6...c5 is rather different, but, in view of its comparative novelty, such a reorientation could have proved both unexpected, and successful. Incidentally, this variation is by no means discredited in theory and later it was played by many well-known grandmasters, right up to Kramnik. And yet it has to be admitted that here the course of positional pressurising for White is more in Karpov's style, whereas Black's latent preparation of this or that undermining of the enemy centre is not fully in Korchnoi's spirit. Therefore it is not surprising that in the 32nd game the situation on the board began quite soon to turn in our favour. However, right to the very last minutes of this dramatic encounter, our totally exhausted group did not believe that things would have a happy end.

'However, the return flight was also far from cloudless – in the literal sense: almost all the way to Bombay we were followed closely by another typhoon. I remember how several times the aircraft plunged into a deep air pocket, inducing slight panic among the passengers. But even so, this was nothing in comparison with that incredible relief that we all felt, when the burden of this ordeal was lifted from our shoulders.'

In my view, Karpov played this match during something of a slump, and so right up to the 17th game he did not have any playing advantage over Korchnoi – moreover, objectively Korchnoi even played the more interesting chess. It was only after his tragic blunder in the 17th game that Korchnoi, as they say, 'began to drift', and he should have quickly lost the match. But Karpov did not win several won positions, and the match dragged out...

In the end, the result of the match showed that Korchnoi had too great an amplitude of oscillation between strong and weak moves. Karpov played, perhaps, not so colourfully, but he nevertheless made fewer mistakes. Generally speaking, the 'Karpov problem' consists precisely in this evenness of his play, his amazing ability to maintain a fairly high level quality of moves for a long time. Of course, he made blunders, but, in contrast to the blunders of his opponents, in the overwhelming majority of cases they were not fatal. This property, plus the champion's exceptional tenacity, enabled him also later to 'stretch out' the most difficult, sometimes hopeless matches.

Baguio served as a warning signal for Karpov, forcing him to begin readjusting little by little. And from 1979 he began a period when he developed a new algorithm and steadily improved his play. Later, remembering his battles with Korchnoi, Karpov was to comment: 'Those were his best years, but I developed more quickly than he strengthened his play.'

Celestial Play

In February 1979 Karpov started a strong tournament in Munich and was leading after five rounds (+2=3), but then he was forced to return home urgently because of the death of his father. After this heavy blow he would probably have declined to participate in the forthcoming 'Tournament of Stars' (Montreal, April-May 1979), had he not agreed beforehand to play there, and had he not realised that if he dropped out it would 'place under threat the very organisation of the event'.

The double-round tournament of ten stars in Montreal, although 'distinguished' by the absence of the boycotted Korchnoi, assembled a field that was unique for those times: Karpov, Tal, Spassky and all the strongest non-Soviet players in the world. An ideal test for the champion! And after a short draw at the start with Hübner he determinedly got down to business.

Tal: 'Chessplayers, as a rule, are unforgiving people, and for this reason the 2nd round clash between Karpov and Timman was eagerly awaited. After all, it was the Dutch grandmaster who had inflicted the last tournament defeat on the world champion *(in Bugojno 1978 – G.K.)*. It could be expected that Karpov would be out for revenge, and in this he succeeded brilliantly. The entire game was conducted by Karpov in one breath: he consistently restricted his opponent's counterplay, and seized space inch by inch...'

Here it should be mentioned that Karpov's special, exceptional refinement in the sphere of prophylaxis makes him close to Petrosian. 'In contrast to the majority of his colleagues, it would appear that from nature he was endowed with highly developed prophylactic thinking,' thinks Mark Dvoretsky. 'The following game by Karpov (and to no lesser degree his commentary on it) vividly demonstrates the style of play and the way of thinking of the then world champion. How much subtle work is concealed behind outward simplicity!'

Game 78
A.Karpov-J.Timman
Montreal 1979, 2nd round
Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence B07

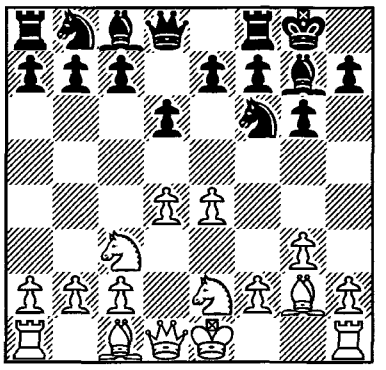
1 e4 d6 2 d4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 g6 4 g3

Karpov usually played 4 ♘f3 and ♗e2 (*Game Nos.73 and 77*), but in this encounter with one of the acknowledged experts on this defence he wanted, in his own words, to experiment a little, to try something new: 'I played in accordance with my mood.'

4...♗g7 5 ♗g2 0-0 6 ♘ge2

Also a solid, but comparatively rare variation. 'Since the time that it came to prominence in chess theory, the Pirc-Ufimtsev Defence has acquired the reputation of being a not altogether correct opening. And, in order to confirm this opinion, all kinds of attacking schemes for White were intensively devel-

oped. Years were required to get away from such an incorrect approach, but even now, through inertia, many unhurried strategic plans are still overshadowed.' (Karpov)



6...e5 (another plan tried by Timman is 6...♘bd7 and ...c7-c5) **7 0-0**

Soon after this game it also happened that I had to defend this position with Black: 7 h3 exd4 (7...b6!? or 7...♘bd7 and ...b7-b6 is interesting) 8 ♘xd4 ♖e8 9 0-0 ♘bd7 10 a4 a5 11 ♘db5 ♘c5 12 ♗g5 ♗d7 13 ♕d2 h6! 14 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 15 ♘d5 ♗xb5 16 axb5 (Geller-Kasparov, 47th USSR Championship, Minsk 1979), and here the simplest was 16...♘xe4 with equality.

7...♘a6

Not the best reply; 7...c6, 7...♘c6 or 7...exd4 is much more usual. 'As the middlegame approaches, and particularly in the middlegame itself, the scattered state of Black's forces will cause him much inconvenience. However, leading grandmasters (and Timman is certainly one of them) are obliged to have – and usually do have – their own opinion regarding this or that book variation. This enables evaluations to be made more precise, and promotes the development of theory.'

8 ♖e1 c6 9 h3

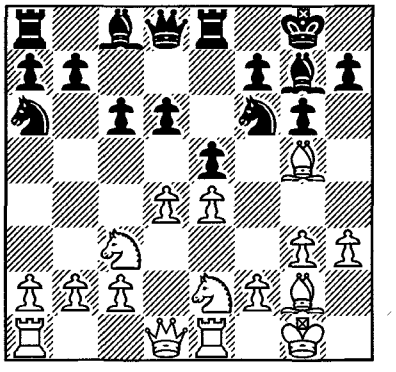
'A typical prophylactic move in such situations,' explains Karpov. 'White restricts the opponent's bishop, and at the same time also creates a "no-go area" on the kingside for the remaining minor pieces.'

9...♖e8

'All Black's hopes of obtaining counterplay are associated with pressure on the e4-pawn.' (Karpov). 'But this is already prophylactic thinking,' adds Dvoretsky. 'Karpov immediately determines the opponent's main idea, for which he will carefully watch throughout the entire game.'

10 ♗g5

Provoking ...h7-h6, in order then to play ♕d2 with gain of tempo. 'Again a typical device, which pursues the same aim – the accumulation of small advantages. Then all these imperceptible factors merge together to form that superiority of one set of pieces over another, which is customarily called a positional advantage.' (Karpov). True, in the light of the following comment, the simple 10 ♗e3!? comes into consideration.



10...h6?!

After 10...exd4 11 ♘xd4 h6 Karpov gives 12 ♗f4! g5 13 ♗c1 (the weakness of the f5-square!), while if 10...♕b6!? – 'simply 11 ♖b1 with advantage, since 11...exd4 12 ♘xd4 ♘c5 13 b4 ♘cxe4 is clearly unsatisfactory in view of 14 ♗xe4! ♘xe4 15 ♘xe4 ♗xd4 16 ♘f6+.' Of course, 13...♘e6 is correct, and therefore I would have preferred 13 ♘b3! ♘e6 14 ♗e3 ♕c7 15 ♕d2 etc.

But instead of 12...♘c5, '12...d5 is possible, or 12...♘g4!? 13 hxg4 *(13 ♘ce2 ♘f6! – G.K.)* 13...♗xd4 14 ♗e3 ♗xe3 15 ♖xe3 d5! with an unclear game – this variation has its inner

logic: the bishop at g5 is taking almost no part in the battle for the centre, and Black exploits this factor.' (Dvoretsky). Indeed, after 16 e5 d4! 17 ♘a4 ♕b4 18 c3 ♗xg4! 19 ♕xg4 ♕xa4 20 ♖a1 (20 e6 ♕xa2!) 20...♖ad8 21 b3 ♕a3 22 cxd4 ♘c7 he consolidates his position. 14 ♕f3 ♗xg4! 15 ♕xg4 ♗xf2+ 16 ♔h2 ♗xe1 17 ♖xe1 ♖e5! is also unclear.

11 ♗e3 ♕c7?!

Taking away this square from the knight at a6. Karpov recommends the prophylactic 11...♔h7 ('since all the same this move will have to be made sooner or later') followed by 12 ♕d2 exd4 13 ♘xd4 *(! – G.K.)* 13...♘c5 14 f3 d5 15 ♘xc6 ♘cxe4 16 fxe4 (not 16 ♘xd8 ♘xd2 17 ♘xf7?! ♖xe3! 18 ♖xe3 d4) 16...bxc6, 'and Black has a good game.'

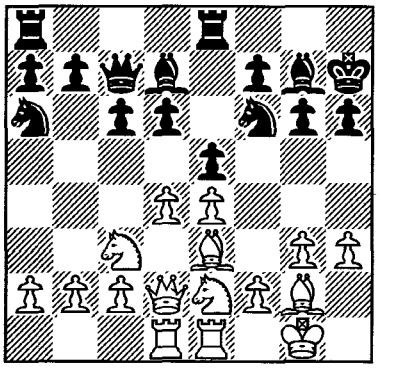
However, 17 exd5 cxd5 18 ♘xd5 contests this evaluation: if 18...♖b8 there follows 19 ♗xa7 ♖xe1+ 20 ♖xe1 ♖xb2 21 ♗d4!, if 18...♘e4 – 19 ♕d3 ♘xg3 (19...f5 20 ♖ad1) 20 ♗f2 or the unexpected 20 ♗xh6!, while after 18...♘xd5 19 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 20 ♗xd5 ♖b8 21 ♗xa7 ♖xe1+ 22 ♖xe1 ♖xb2 23 ♗b3! White retains his extra pawn and chances of success (23...♗xh3 24 ♖e7 etc.).

Apart from 15...♘cxe4 Dvoretsky has suggested 15...bxc6 16 ♗xc5 dxe4, but here too after 17 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 18 fxe4 Black does not appear to have compensation for the pawn: 18...♘d7 (18...♖d2 19 e5!) 19 ♖ad1 ♖b8 20 ♗a3 ♖e8 (20...♗xc3? 21 bxc3 and 22 e5!) 21 ♘a4 etc.

Apparently it is better to bring the restless knight into play – 11...exd4 12 ♗xd4! (12 ♘xd4 ♘c5 13 ♗f4 ♘h5!) 12...♘c7 (not now 12...♘c5?! on account of 13 e5!), 'in the spirit of the game Sveshnikov-Tseshkovsky (Sochi 1976), although this also does not promise Black equality' (Karpov) after 13 ♕d2 ♘e6 14 ♗e3 ♔h7 15 g4.

12 ♕d2 ♔h7 (Black has similar problems after 12...exd4 13 ♘xd4 ♔h7 14 ♖ad1) **13 ♖ad1 ♗d7**

It is unfavourable to play 13...exd4 14 ♗xd4, when again 14...♘c5? is not possible because of 15 e5! And 'in the event of 13...♗e6 14 g4 ♖ad8 15 f4 ♗c4 16 ♘g3 White has an equally promising position as in the game.' (Karpov). In Dvoretsky's opinion, here 16...exf4 17 ♗xf4 c5 deserves consideration. I think that after this White would have happily replied 18 d5.



14 g4!

A typical move. Karpov's commentary is instructive: 'After some thought, I came to the conclusion that straightforward play in the centre would not get me anywhere. Now, with the aim of seizing fresh territory, the kingside pawns must be advanced. But I did not wish to play 14 f4 immediately. It would be illogical to increase the tension straight away – all the same White will subsequently have to play g3-g4, so why not first utilise a resource for strengthening the position, such as g3-g4 and ♘g3. At the same time White also solves an important strategic problem – he reinforces his e4-pawn.'

14...♖ad8 15 ♘g3 ♗c8

'The advance f2-f4 can be radically prevented only by ...g6-g5, but Black's position is not yet so bad for him to decide on such a desperate measure.'

16 f4! b5?!

Every grandmaster has his favourite moves, which he makes at the first opportunity. Timman liked to activate his game by advancing his b-pawn, but here this merely weakens his position even more. However, it is hard to offer Black good advice: thus, in the event of

16...exf4 17 ♗xf4 ♕b6 18 b3 followed by ♖f1 and ♗e3 he would also be threatened with death by suffocation.

'Knowing Karpov's style, it is very easy to guess his next move.' (Dvoretsky)

17 a3! b4?! 18 axb4 ♘xb4 (the only result of the desperate pawn advance is that now it is advantageous for White to go into practically any endgame) **19 ♘ce2!**

'Black's idea was somehow to bring his pieces together, by playing ...a7-a5, ...♗a6, ...exd4 and ...c6-c5. But this is a lengthy process, and White succeeds in hindering his opponent's plan.' (Karpov)

'We would probably have been thinking about how to exploit as soon as possible White's solid positional advantage – whether to play f4-f5, prepare g4-g5, and so on. But Karpov thinks quite differently: even in such situations he first of all monitors the opponent's possible intentions and tries to prevent them.' (Dvoretsky)

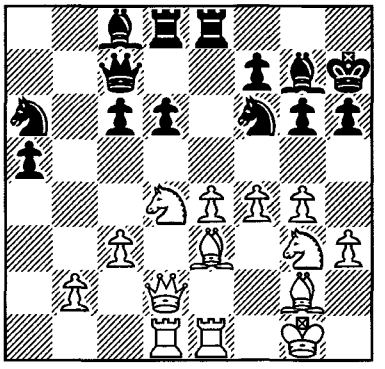
19...exd4?!

An admission that the battle has been lost. Black concedes the centre, after which he has nothing to hope for. But, according to Karpov, 19...a5 20 c3 or 19...c5 20 fxe5 dxe5 21 d5 was also hopeless.

20 ♘xd4 a5

'White's subsequent play essentially reduces to preventing the opponent's pieces from coming into the game.' (Karpov)

21 c3 ♘a6



22 ♕c2!

'Probably the best move of the game, which by and large is an excellent illustration of Nimzowitsch's idea about the overprotection of strategically important points. Here two forms of prophylaxis mentioned by Nimzowitsch are simultaneously combined – prevention of the opponent's plans and overprotection.' (Dvoretsky). White does not allow the black knight to come into play (22...♘c5 23 b4!) and he additionally supports his e4-pawn.

22...♗d7 23 ♘f3! (again prophylaxis against ...♘c5) **23...♖e7**

In Karpov's opinion, '23...♘c5 would not do because of 24 e5.' Dvoretsky objects: 'I don't see how 24...♘d5 is refuted – after 25 ♗xc5 dxc5 it is not easy for White to demonstrate his advantage: 26 ♘h5 (Adianto) 26...♗h8 or 26 ♕c1 (Nunn) 26...c4 27 ♘e4 f6 28 ♘d6 ♖f8.' However, after 26 ♕e4! White's position is clearly better (26...c4 27 ♖d2), although Black can still resist.

And after 23...c5, in the words of Karpov, the knight at a6 would have the appearance of a living reproach.

24 ♗f2!

'One of the last prophylactic moves. Prior to his decisive offensive, White arranges his pieces in the most harmonious way possible and... once again reinforces his central e4-forepost! 24 ♕d3 was premature in view of 24...♗c8,' writes Karpov. He can hardly have considered cooperative variations such as 25 e5? ♘d5 26 exd6? ♖xd6 27 c4? ♖xe3! 28 ♖xe3 ♘xe3 29 ♕xd6 ♘xd1 and wins (Nunn), but he guessed that Timman wanted to play his bishop to e8, so he did not force ...♗c8, but made a useful waiting move, strengthening the threat of e4-e5.

24...♗e8?!

In the words of Karpov, 'a tactical mistake'. But I think it will be agreed that somehow you would not want to play 24...♗c8 voluntarily.

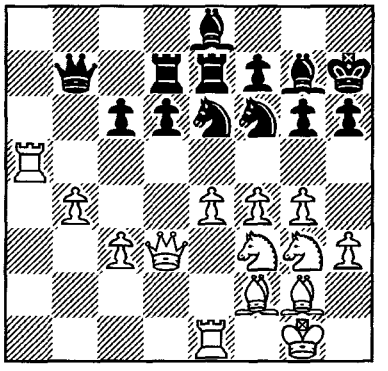
25 ♕d3! ♕b7 (25...♘b8? 26 e5 or 26 g5 and wins) **26 ♖a1!**

After lengthy manoeuvres in his half of the board, White again defers the start of the offensive, preferring to win material.

26...♘c7 (here, and also a move later, ...♕xb2? is not possible because of ♖eb1) **27 ♖xa5**

Only the second crossing of the demarcation line (after 10 ♗g5) has led to a completely won position for White: he is a pawn up and his pieces dominate, having squeezed the opponent's main forces onto the last two ranks.

27...♖dd7 28 b4 ♘e6



29 ♗e3!

Karpov again does not hurry, intending also to drive the knight onto the back rank. He rejected 29 ♕d2, since 'after 29...d5!? Black have obtained something resembling counterplay: 30 e5 ♘e4 31 ♘xe4 dxe4 32 ♘d4 c5, with complications.' Here too there were no saving chances: 33 ♗xe4 ♕b6 34 f5 or 33 bxc5 ♕c7 34 ♖ea1 ♘xc5 35 ♕e3, but... this was not enough for Karpov!

29...c5 30 f5 ♘d8 31 b5

Not allowing the knight to go to c6. 'For "complete happiness" it only remains for White to play c3-c4, so as to achieve domination over the whole board.' (Karpov)

31...♔h8 32 ♗f2

'The bishop has done its work at e3 and it again withdraws, to strengthen the e4-point.' (Dvoretsky)

32...♕c7 33 ♖a4 ♕b8 34 c4 ♖a7 (there is no point in discussing 34...♘g8 35 h4) **35 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 36 e5! dxe5 37 ♘xe5 ♖a2 38 ♗xc5 1-0**

A eulogy to prophylaxis!

By then defeating Spassky, Ljubojevic and Kavalek, the champion was leading the race after the first half of the tournament, but in the next round he missed a win on the 39th move against Hübner and was caught by Tal, who was playing brilliantly. Their sharp rivalry forced Karpov to play for a win against Timman also with Black.

'In this game probably the most significant novelty of the tournament occurred,' Karpov later stated. 'It had been prepared for Korchnoi, but somehow he deftly avoided this preparation. And then completely unexpectedly the variation "fired" at Timman.'

Game 79

J.Timman-A.Karpov

Montreal 1979, 11th round

English Opening A28

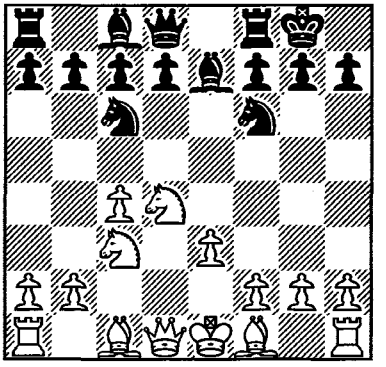
1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e5 3 ♘f3 ♘c6 4 e3

4 g3 ♗b4 was intensively tested in Baguio, and therefore, not wishing to check the quality of the analytical work of Karpov's brigade, Timman is the first to deviate, hoping that his opponent's knowledge will be less detailed in other variations.

4...♗e7

Meeting a surprise with a surprise! Karpov also turns along a rarely-used path, avoiding the main variation 4...♗b4 5 ♕c2. Now in the event of 5...0–0 6 d3 ♖e8 7 ♗d2 ♗xc3 8 ♗xc3 d5 9 cxd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗e2 ♗f5 Black has no problems (Ehlvest-Kasparov, Reykjavik 1988), but 6 ♘d5! ♖e8 7 ♕f5!? is more unpleasant for him – this original thrust was introduced by Keene back in 1977. Therefore instead of 5...0–0 Black often parts with his bishop immediately: 5...♗xc3 6 ♕xc3 ♕e7 7 a3 a5 8 b3 d5 with equality (H.Olafsson-Karpov, Malta Olympiad 1980).

5 d4 exd4 6 ♘xd4 0-0



7 ♘xc6

After 7 ♗e2 all the same Black can play 7...d5!? with the idea of 8 cxd5 ♘b4! Now, since 9 e4? fails to 9...♘xe4! 10 ♘xe4 ♕xd5, White has to be satisfied with equality – 9 ♗f3! ♘bxd5 10 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 11 0-0 ♗f6 12 ♕b3 ♘b6 13 ♖d1 (Miles-Timman, Portoroz 1979). Another promising reaction is 7...♗b4!? 8 0-0 ♗xc3 9 bxc3 ♖e8 (the opponent of the famous maestro played much more weakly: 9...d5? 10 cxd5 ♘xd5 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♕d4 ♗e6 13 ♗a3 Rubinstein-E.Cohn, Pistyan 1912) 10 f3 ♘e5 11 e4 d6, which also leads to a position from modern grandmaster practice (Azmaiparashvili-Anand, Dubai rapidplay 2002).

It is also worth mentioning the manoeuvre 7 ♘de2 ♖e8 8 ♘f4, restricting the activity of the d-pawn and thereby securing control of greater space: 8...♘e5 9 ♗e2 c6 10 0-0 a6 11 b3 b5 12 ♗b2 d6 13 ♕c2 (Timman-Miles, Bugojno 1984).

7...bxc6 8 ♗e2 d5 9 0-0 ♗d6 10 b3

The preparatory exchange 10 cxd5 cxd5 makes the defects in Black's pawn structure less noticeable, and White no longer has any hopes of an opening advantage.

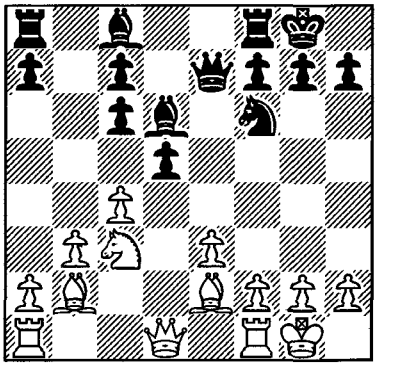
10...♕e7!

Karpov writes that 'all the indications are that Black is well placed both in the centre, and on both of the flanks', but what should especially alarm White is the absence of an important defender of his king – the knight at f3. Because of this he is soon forced to advance one of his pawns and weaken his king's defences.

11 ♗b2

11 cxd5? loses the knight after 11...♕e5!, while if 11 ♕c2, then 11...♕e5 12 f4 ♕e7 looks good. The quiet development of the bishop would appear to help White avoid new problems, allowing him to hope for a successful defence on a restricted part of the board, where for the moment there are no targets to attack.

Tal: 'Opening books of recent years have unanimously evaluated the position after 11 ♗b2 in favour of White. Karpov's simple but paradoxical reply forces this evaluation to be radically changed. Right to the end of the tournament the grandmasters analysed this continuation, seeking equality for White.'



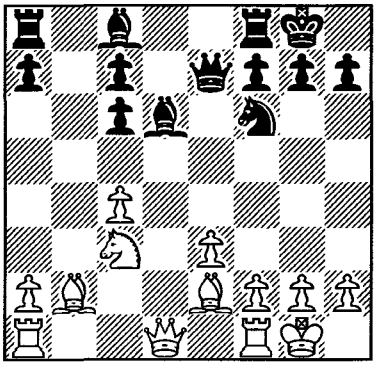
11...dxc4!

The author of this unexpected capture was Igor Zaitsev, who suggested this move to Karpov during the preparations for the match in Baguio. The idea of the novelty is to expand to the utmost the activity of the black pieces, which are successfully trained on the kingside. Zaitsev, who was famed for his non-routine chess vision, immediately saw that this main virtue of the strategically seemingly ridiculous exchange would more than cancel out its basic drawback – the complete break-up of the pawn structure.

12 bxc4?

Surprisingly, the very first independent move by White is the main cause of his defeat. Timman's choice is bad for the reason that the rook at a8 immediately comes into play, after which the white queen proves to be overloaded by defensive functions. In addition, Black acquires a new target to attack – the c4-pawn, the defence of which can again only be ensured by the queen.

But at the board it was not easy to decide on 12 ♗xc4 – another defender moves away from the king. Here, apart from general considerations, concrete variations are also needed. The premature attack 12...♗xh2+? (but not Karpov's '!?' sign) 13 ♔xh2 ♘g4+ quickly peters out: 14 ♔g3 ♕g5 15 f4 ♕g6 16 ♔f3 ♖e8 17 e4. The systematic offensive 12...♕e5 13 g3 ♗h3 (Karpov) is also ineffective in view of 14 ♖e1 ♖fd8 15 ♕f3 with advantage to White. However, after 12...♘g4! 13 g3 Black can choose between forcing a draw – 13...♘xh2 (Karpov) 14 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 15 ♔g1 ♗xg3 and continuing double-edged play: 13...♘e5!? 14 ♗e2 ♗f5 15 e4 (15 ♕d4? ♗d3!) 15...♗h3 16 ♖e1 ♗c5.

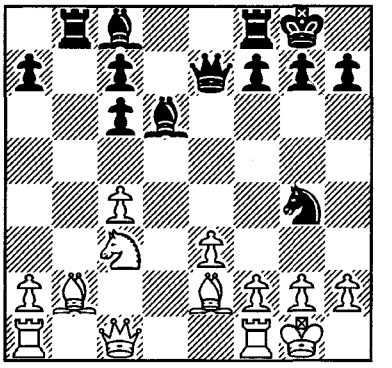


12...♖b8! 13 ♕c1

It is not easy to defend the bishop: the simple-minded 13 ♖b1? loses to 13...♖xb2 14 ♖xb2 ♕e5 (Karpov), but also after 13 ♕c2 ♕e5! 14 g3 ♗f5 15 ♕c1 ♕e6 16 ♖d1 ♘g4 Black's pressure is extremely unpleasant.

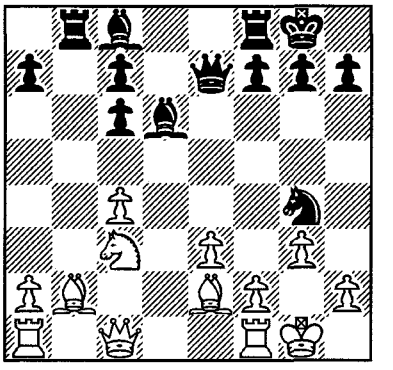
13...♘g4

'Black's attack develops easily and spontaneously. White has to follow the development of events on the kingside with anxiety.' (Karpov)



14 g3?!

White would have lost quickly after 14 h3? ♕e5 15 g3 ♘xf2! 16 ♖xf2 ♖xb2! 17 ♕xb2 ♕xg3+ 18 ♖g2 ♕xe3+ etc. But the exchange 14 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 was necessary, and now not 15 ♖e1 ♖b4! (Kholmov), but 15 h3, hoping in the event of 15...♗f5 16 ♘e2 ♕g5 17 ♘f4 to gradually neutralise the opponent's initiative, although after 15...♗h5! 16 ♘a4 (16 ♖e1 ♕e5! 17 f4 ♕e7) 16...c5 17 ♗c3 ♖fe8 it is not easy to do this.



14...♖e8!

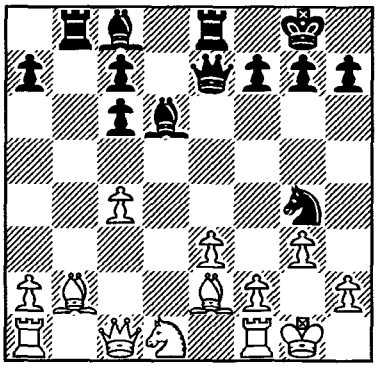
The immediate attack with sacrifices 14...♘xh2 15 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 16 ♔g2 ♕h3+ 17 ♔g1 ♗xg3 18 fxg3 ♕xg3+ 19 ♔h1 seemed to Karpov to be sufficient only for a draw by perpetual check.

Indeed, the inclusion of the rook at e8 does not bring success: 19...♖e8!? 20 ♖f3! ♕h4+ 21 ♔g1! (the incautious 21 ♔g2? would allow Black to break up the opponent's defences in computer-like style: 21...♖e5! 22 ♖g3 ♗h3+! 23 ♔f2 ♖f5+ 24 ♗f3 ♗g4 25 ♔g2 ♗xf3+ 26 ♖xf3 ♖g5+ 27 ♔f1 ♕h1+ 28 ♔e2 ♕h5! 29 ♘e4 ♖g2+ 30 ♘f2 ♖g3 and wins) 21...♖e6 22 ♗f1 ♖g6+ 23 ♗g2 ♗h3 24 ♖xh3 ♕xh3 25 ♕d2, and Black must give perpetual check – 25...♖xg2+ 26 ♕xg2 ♕xe3+ 27 ♔h2 ♕h6+.

15 ♘d1?

This allows a series of heavy blows, but 15 ♗f3, as recommended by some commentators, also proves insufficient in view of 15...♕f6! 16 ♗xg4 ♗xg4 17 f3 ♗h3 18 ♖f2 ♕g5! or 16 ♗g2 ♕h6 17 h4 (17 h3 ♘e5 Karpov) 17...g5! 18 ♗xc6 (18 e4 ♗f4!) 18...gxh4! 19 e4 ♕h5.

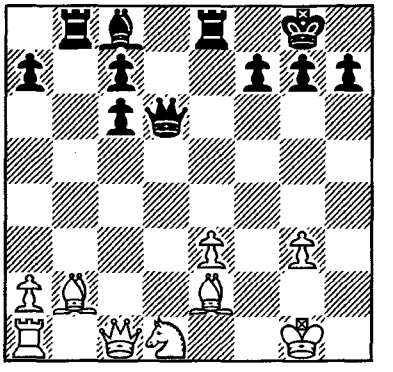
The comparatively best 15 ♕c2 allows the standard attack 15...♘xh2 16 ♔xh2 ♕h4+ 17 ♔g1 ♗xg3 18 fxg3 ♕xg3+ 19 ♔h1 ♖e6! It appears to be time for White to resign, but he unexpectedly finds a possibility of prolonging the resistance, by taking play into an endgame where his extra piece provides little consolation: 20 ♗h5! ♖h6 21 ♕h2 ♕xh2+ 22 ♔xh2 ♖xh5+ 23 ♔g1 ♖xb2 24 ♖ad1! g6 25 ♖d8+ ♔g7 26 ♖xc8 ♖g5+ 27 ♔h1 ♖gg2 28 ♖f4 ♖gc2.



15...♘xh2! 16 c5 (16 ♔xh2 is not possible on account of 16...♕h4+ 17 ♔g1 ♗xg3 18 fxg3 ♕xg3+ 19 ♔h1 ♖e4!) **16...♘xf1! 17 cxd6 ♘xg3!**

This spectacular finish to the raid by the knight into the opponent's rear, which was overlooked by Timman, deprives White of his last illusions.

18 fxg3 ♕xd6



19 ♔f2

After 19 ♔g2 Karpov gives a win by 19...♕h6 20 g4 ♕g5 21 e4 ♕xc1 22 ♗xc1 ♖xe4 23 ♘c3 ♖e8. I would have preferred 19...♕d5+ 20 ♗f3 ♗h3+ 21 ♔f2 ♕d3 22 ♗e2 ♕f5+ 23 ♔e1 c5 24 ♕c3 ♕g5, but the choice here is a matter of taste.

19...♕h6 20 ♗d4 ♕h2+

The fact that the game continued can be explained only by Timman's unwillingness to resign so early.

21 ♔e1 ♕xg3+ 22 ♔d2 ♕g2! 23 ♘b2 ♗a6 24 ♘d3 ♗xd3! 25 ♔xd3 ♖bd8 26 ♗f1 ♕e4+ 27 ♔c3 c5! 28 ♗xc5 ♕c6 29 ♔b3 ♖b8+ 30 ♔a3 ♖e5 31 ♗b4 ♕b6, and only here did White finally resign (**0-1**).

This is one of those wins that makes an especially terrible impression on professionals. Just think: to effectively win in 20 moves(!), in a harmless opening variation(!), and without any blunders by the opponent(!).

Karpov again became the sole leader, but, as often happens after an unusually emotional game, there came a temporary slump in his play. In the next round he unexpectedly lost with White to the tournament outsider Larsen,

who surprised the champion after 1 e4 with the rare Scandinavian Defence – 1...d5 (incidentally, this was also played against me by Anand in the 14th game of our match, New York 1995). At the time the Dane gave this amusing explanation: 'Hort said to me: "Well yes, you're a Scandinavian!" I replied: "Yes, but this is simply a good variation of the Caro-Kann!" I think that against Karpov the idea of avoiding pawn weakenings is a good one.'

Indeed, Karpov defeated Larsen in the Caro-Kann both before this game – in Bugojno (1978), and many times after it – in Tilburg (1979 and 1982), Amsterdam (1980) and Linares (1983). But – regarding the question of unforgiving chess players! – as soon as the opportunity presented itself, he also gained convincing revenge on the Dane in the Scandinavian Defence (Mar del Plata 1982).

In the end the Montreal 'Tournament of Stars' concluded in a triumph for the world champion and the ex-world champion: 1-2. Karpov and Tal – 12 out of 18; 3. Portisch – 10½; 4. Ljubojevic – 9; 5-6. Spassky and Timman – 8½; 7-9. Hort, Hübner and Kavalek – 8; 10. Larsen – 5½.

'This was not the best tournament in Karpov's career, and yet he played better than anyone!' Tal modestly remarked. 'Karpov had Tal as his second, and Tal had Karpov as his second. It turned out that he trains me no worse than I train him.' At that time the ex-champion had not yet abandoned the hope of again forcing his way through to a match for the world championship: soon afterwards he brilliantly won the Interzonal tournament in Riga.

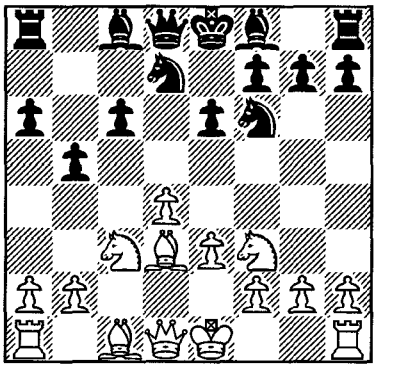
For his part, over a period of two years Karpov won a whole series of tournaments, large and small, and every one of his rare defeats became a genuine sensation. Thus at the start of the European Team Championship in Skara (January 1980), where I made my debut for the USSR team, the champion suddenly lost with White to Miles, who replied to 1 e4 with the audacious 1...a6?! This was the Englishman's sole success during the entire history of their encounters with the classical time control, Karpov scoring 12 wins against him, all with White (for one of them, see *Game No.87*).

In May 1980 Karpov set off with Tal and Polugayevsky to a super-tournament of 12 grandmasters in Bugojno. After his recent defeat at the hands of Polugayevsky in the Candidates match, it was no longer 'the same' Tal, but good form was demonstrated by Larsen. After seven rounds the leading positions were as follows: Larsen – 5½; Timman – 4½; Karpov and Polugayevsky – 4; Andersson, Ljubojevic and Tal – 3½. From this it is apparent just how important was the 8th round game between the world champion and his second.

On this occasion, obviously remembering his difficulties against Tal in the Sicilian Defence (*Game No.72*), Karpov decided again to 'serve from the other side' – and he gained an impressive win in what was then the most topical branch of the Meran Variation.

Game 80
A.Karpov-M.Tal
Bugojno 1980, 8th round
Semi-Slav Defence D48

1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 c6 4 e3 ♘f6 5 ♘f3 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3 (6 ♕c2 – *Game Nos.101 and 102*) **6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 a6**



It was hard for these players, closely tied by

joint analytical work, having to fight each other. To engage in a theoretical dispute in public would be absurd, and so the grandmasters tried to surprise each other: Karpov avoided 1 e4, and Tal replied with an opening that was rare for him.

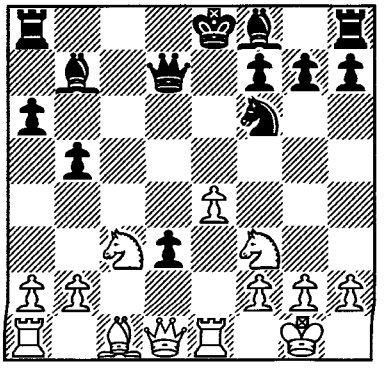
9 e4 c5 10 d5 c4 11 dxe6 cxd3

Black avoids 11...fxe6 (*Game No.103*) in favour of a less sharp move, which at the time was considered quite acceptable.

12 exd7+ ♕xd7 13 0-0

'A novelty. Usually 13 ♗g5 or 13 e5 was played.' (Karpov). After 13 e5 ♘d5 14 ♕xd3 practice has shown that White allows his opponent excellent counterplay on the light squares: 14...♘xc3 15 ♕xc3 ♗b7 16 0-0 ♖c8 17 ♕b3 ♗e7 etc.

13...♗b7 14 ♖e1



Reckoning that the d3-pawn is doomed, White does not force events by the advance of his e-pawn, but prepares more favourable conditions for future operations.

14...♗b4

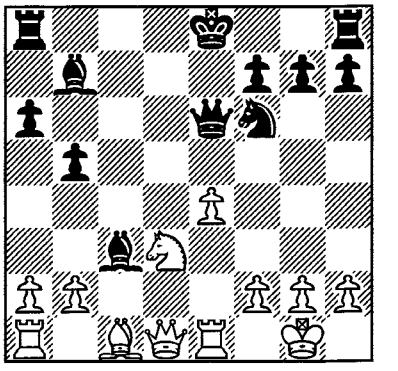
This move was abandoned after the present game, although the way things developed showed that Black's position was defensible. The following line remained under examination by theoreticians somewhat longer: 14...♗e7 15 e5 ♘d5 16 ♘e4 0-0 17 ♕xd3 ♕g4. But in the end it transpired that after 18 ♘fg5! the slight activity of Black's pieces does not compensate for his pawn deficit: 18...♖ad8 19 a3 f5 20 exf6 gxf6 21 ♕h3! ♕xh3 22 ♘xh3 ♖fe8 23 ♗d2 (Karpov-Lutz, Dortmund 1994), or 18...♖fd8 19 h3 ♕h5 20 ♘g3 ♕g6 21 ♕xg6 hxg6 22 a3 ♖ac8 23 ♘f3 b4 24 ♗g5 f6 25 exf6 gxf6 26 ♗d2 (Piket-Shirov, Aruba 1995).

Since that time 11...cxd3 has been firmly confined to the 'archives', being considered less sharp and promising than its rival 11...fxe6.

15 ♘e5 ♕e6

Other moves are no better. For example, in the event of 15...♕c7 Black's activity comes to an end after 16 ♗f4! ♗xc3 17 ♘xd3 ♕d7 18 bxc3 ♖d8 19 ♖e3 0-0 20 ♗g5 with advantage.

16 ♘xd3 ♗xc3



17 ♘f4!

A strong intermediate move, which allows White to fight for the initiative. After 17 bxc3 0-0-0 18 f3 ♕c4 19 ♖e3 ♘g4! 20 fxg4 ♗xe4 21 ♕e2 ♗xd3 22 ♕f3 ♕c5 the best way out for him would probably be to force a draw – 23 ♗a3 ♕xa3 24 ♕c6+.

17...♕d7

'It was bad to play 17...♕e5 18 bxc3 0-0 19 ♘d3, when 19...♕xc3 fails to 20 ♗b2.' (Karpov). But in my opinion, the centralisation of the queen and the regaining of the pawn would have allowed Black to hope for equality: 20...♕c6 21 ♖c1 ♕b6 22 ♘c5 ♖ad8 23 ♕f3 ♗c8.

In addition, it is not clear whether White could have breached Black's defences after the queen sacrifice: 17...♗xe1 18 ♘xe6 ♗xf2+ 19

♔xf2 fxe6! (19...♘xe4+? 20 ♔g1 fxe6 21 ♕h5+! g6 22 ♕e5) 20 e5 ♘e4+ 21 ♔g1 0-0.

18 bxc3 ♘xe4

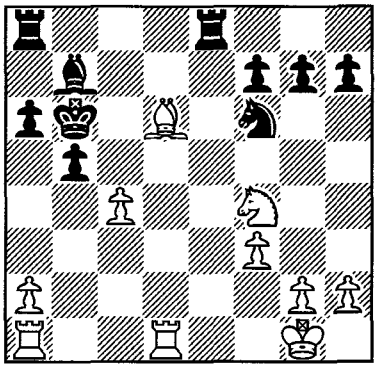
The other way of exchanging queens is dubious – 18...♕xd1 19 ♖xd1, after which White has a forced way to retain his extra pawn: 19...♘xe4 20 ♗a3 (Karpov) 20...♖d8 21 ♖e1! ♔d7 22 f3 ♘d6 23 ♖ad1 ♔c6 24 ♘e6! fxe6 25 ♖xe6. Since Black cannot exchange all the rooks, White retains winning chances: 25...♖he8 26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 27 ♖xd6+ ♔c7 28 ♔f2 ♖d8 29 ♖e6 ♖d2+ 30 ♔g3 ♖xa2 31 ♗f8 g6 32 ♖e7+ ♔b6 33 ♖xh7.

19 ♕xd7+ ♔xd7 20 ♗a3 ♖he8 21 ♖ed1+ ♔c7 22 f3

Now the knight has to retreat, and not to d6, but to a position from where it will be unable to help the king.

22...♘f6 23 ♗d6+! ♔b6 24 c4!

Signalling the start of the attack. The black king feels uncomfortable, despite the absence of the queens.



24...♖ac8?

Now the king is completely deprived of its pawn protection, and the white rooks become rampant.

Hopes of saving the game were offered by 24...bxc4!, preserving the a6-pawn. In this case the king would still have had something resembling a shelter. Karpov gives the short variation 25 ♖ab1+ ♔c6 26 ♖b4 with the evaluation '±', but after 26...♖ac8! 27 a4! g5! White has nothing better than 28 ♖xc4+ ♔b6 29 ♗c7+! ♔a7 30 ♖d6, after which there follows the new exchanging operation 30...♘e4! 31 fxe4 gxf4 32 ♖d7 ♖xe4 33 ♖xe4 ♗xe4 34 ♖xf7 ♔b7 35 ♗xf4+ ♔b6, taking play into an endgame where Black has good chances of a draw.

A stronger reply to 24...bxc4 25 ♖ab1+ ♔c6 is 26 ♖d4! with the idea of continuing the attack, for example: 26...♖ac8 27 ♗a3 ♔c7 28 ♖xc4+ ♔b8 29 ♖cb4 ♖c7 30 ♗b2 ♔c8 31 ♗xf6 gxf6 32 ♖b6 etc. Here 26...♖ed8! is a better defence. After 27 ♖b4 ♖xd6 28 ♖dxc4+ ♔d7 29 ♖xb7+ ♔e8 30 ♖cc7 ♖d7 White retains the initiative, but Black still has real chances of saving the game.

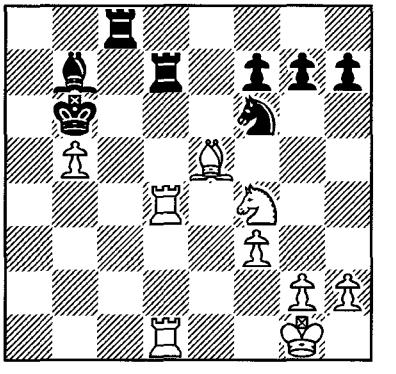
25 cxb5 axb5 26 a4! ♖cd8 27 axb5

Karpov consistently carries out his plan. The black king is covered against rook attacks by the enemy pawn, but White finds a way of getting rid of it. However, the elegant 27 ♖ac1! ♖d7 28 ♗c7+! would have transformed this pawn into an active participant in the attack, ensuring an easy win: 28...♔a7 29 ♖xd7 ♘xd7 30 axb5.

27...♖d7 (it is not possible to drive the knight away: 27...g5 28 ♖ac1! ♖d7 29 ♗c7+! ♔xb5 30 ♖b1+) **28 ♖d4 ♖ed8 29 ♖ad1 ♖c8**

Again 29...g5 is not possible, this time because of 30 ♗e7! ♖xd4 31 ♗xd8+ (Karpov).

30 ♗e5



30...♖e7

Black had a dismal choice between a hope-

less endgame – 30...♖xd4 31 ♗xd4+ ♔xb5 32 ♗xf6 gxf6 33 ♖d7 (Karpov) and the suicidal exposure of his king, which Tal preferred.

31 ♖d6+ ♔xb5 32 ♖b1+ ♔c4 33 ♖d4+ (as the computer indicates, 33 ♖d2 would have mated more quickly) **33...♔c5 34 ♘d3+ 1-0**

In view of unavoidable mate, Black resigned.

In the next round the champion defeated Timman with Black in good style (a Ruy Lopez, the Zaitsev Variation which had come into fashion – 9...♗b7 10 d4 ♖e8), and then won 'to order' against Kavalek and Gligoric. Four successive wins – and all his rivals were left behind: 1. Karpov – 8 out of 11; 2. Larsen – 7½; 3. Timman – 6½, etc.

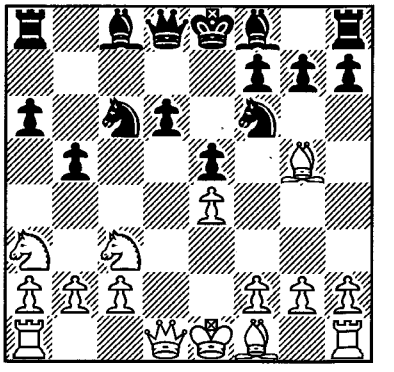
A month and a half later the double-round IBM tournament of eight players began in Amsterdam. Before it started Larsen and Timman declared that they would fight for first place and 'put an end to Karpov's victories'. And whereas Larsen, who was out of form, ended up at the bottom of the tournament table, Timman kept his promise and competed with the champion right to the finish.

Karpov arrived at this tournament with one of the new hopes of Soviet chess, the 1978 world junior champion Sergey Dolmatov. The young player's repertoire included the fashionable Chelyabinsk Variation of the Sicilian Defence. Dolmatov, naturally, also employed it against Karpov. This instructive game requires a short introduction.

The peak of Karpov's strength coincided with the rapid development of the Chelyabinsk Variation, but the champion's suffocating style scared off Black players from the thought of employing this strategically risky set-up against him. The game with Dolmatov confirmed these fears, and for a long time it made grandmasters unwilling to play this against Karpov. Only in 1994 did Lautier venture to do this and he easily gained a draw, but by that time Karpov would only rarely begin a game with 1 e4.

Game 81
A.Karpov-S.Dolmatov
Amsterdam 1980, 5th round
Sicilian Defence B33

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e5 6 ♘db5 d6 7 ♗g5 a6 8 ♘a3 b5



A *tabiya* of the Chelyabinsk Variation. Its development will be described in detail in Volume 6.

9 ♘d5

Karpov employed only this variation, which is strategically the most solid. He played four games with it and won two of them, one on the 101st(!) move against Yurtaev in 1979.

9...♗e7 10 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 11 c3 0-0 12 ♘c2 ♖b8

At that time this rook move, inhibiting the undermining advance a2-a4, was considered to be an important subtlety, since the position after 12...♗g5 13 a4 bxa4 14 ♖xa4 was judged to favour White.

13 ♗e2 (when playing 12...♖b8, in the first instance Black must be prepared for 13 h4! – cf. Volume 6) **13...♗g5 14 0-0 ♗e6**

14...a5 is deemed to be more accurate, depriving the white knight of the b4-square and preparing to contest the outpost at d5 by ...♘c6-e7.

15 ♕d3 ♕d7

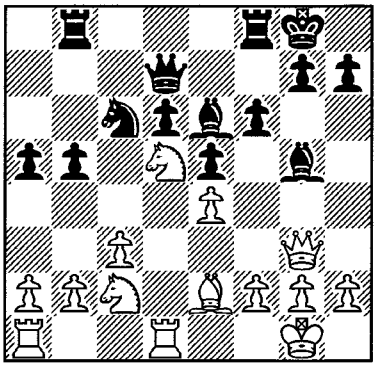
A natural development of the queen with the aim of connecting the rooks, but here too 15...a5 was better.

16 ♕g3! f6?!

Persisting in his aim to keep control of the e3-square, Black goes in for a completely unnecessary weakening of the light squares and in addition he deprives his bishop of the excellent route g5-d8-b6. Meanwhile, 16...♗d8 17 ♘ce3 g6 was quite possible, deferring the exchange of this bishop until better times.

17 ♖fd1 a5

Now this advance, which literally a move ago promised definite counterplay, is no longer effective.



18 ♘a3!

An excellent and unexpected decision! The bishop is watching for the appearance of the knight at e3, in order to promptly exchange it, and so the knight goes a different way. For a player who blindly believes in the classical rules, it is hard to imagine that the return of the knight to the edge of the board is the strongest continuation. By beginning a battle on the queenside, White forces his opponent to gradually turn to passive defence.

18...♘a7

The further pawn advance on the queenside – 18...b4 would merely have worsened Black's position after 19 ♘c4 bxc3 20 bxc3: his bishop is cut off from d8, and the white rook already stands at d1.

19 h3! (the planned exchange of the light-squared bishops is clearly advantageous to White) **19...♔h8**

It should be said that Black's inaccurate play in the opening has by no means led to an immediate strategic fiasco, since there are no obvious weaknesses in his position and all that is evident is not too great a difference in the activity of the pieces. But from this moment the game is transformed into a splendid, textbook example of how to break down the opponent's defences by the accumulation of small pluses. In such work for a long time Karpov had no equals!

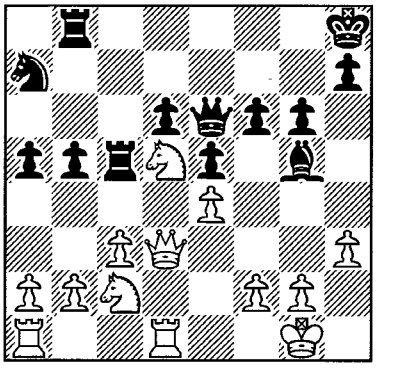
20 ♗g4! ♖fc8?!

Nevertheless Black should have played 20...f5 and, after bringing his bishop into play (but not exchanging it for a knight), set up a defence after the exchanges 21 exf5 ♗xf5 22 ♘c2 ♗xg4 23 ♕xg4 ♕xg4 24 hxg4. Although White still holds the initiative, it is not at all easy for him to achieve anything real, for example: 24...♘c6 25 ♘ce3 g6 26 a4 ♘e7 27 ♘xe7 ♗xe7 28 b4 axb4 29 cxb4 bxa4 30 ♖xa4 ♖f7 31 ♘d5 ♗g5, and the limited amount of material remaining allows Black to hope for a draw.

21 ♗xe6 ♕xe6 22 ♕d3! ♖c5?!

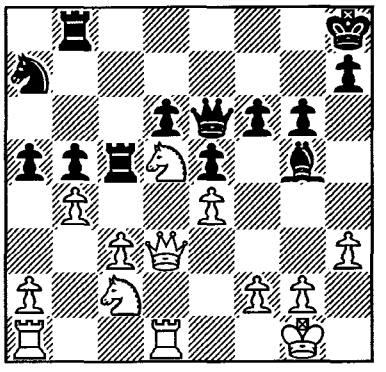
Again a natural and rather weak manoeuvre, allowing White to begin active play. The immediate 22...g6 was better. All the same Black cannot get by without his thematic move, preparing ...f6-f5.

23 ♘c2 g6



24 b4!

Karpov begins a new and far from obvious operation, aimed at removing the pawn obstructions on the queenside and clearing the way for his rook. He has already outlined the contours of the future offensive.



24...axb4 25 ♘cxb4 ♖b7 26 a4! bxa4 27 ♖xa4 f5 28 ♖a6! ♘c8

Black has to retreat, since the active 28...♘b5 would have allowed the white pieces to approach the king along the undefended 8th rank: 29 ♖a8+ ♔g7 30 ♘a6 ♖c8 31 exf5! (choosing the right moment for this exchange enables the king's fortress to be weakened even more) 31...gxf5 32 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 33 ♖b1! ♖a7 34 ♕xb5 ♕xa6 35 ♕b8! Therefore Dolmatov blocks the dangerous line with his knight.

29 ♖a8 ♔g7

A new phase of the battle begins. To win, White must find a way to break up the opponent's still solid defences.

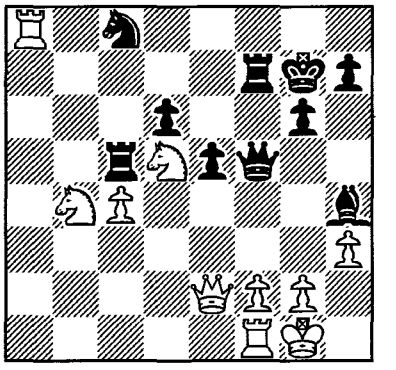
30 ♕e2

30 ♕a6! ♕d7 31 exf5! was more energetic, forcing Black to take with the pawn, which weakens his king's shelter: 31...gxf5 32 ♕d3 ♕f7 33 ♖da1.

30...fxe4

This capture breaks up Black's pawn chain and creates the danger of increasing the opponent's domination on the light squares (which in fact happened in the end). But the exchange of knights 30...♘e7 31 ♘xe7 ♗xe7 would also not have eased Black's position, since the key d5-square would again be occupied by a knight – 32 ♘d5 ♗g5 33 c4.

31 ♕xe4 ♕f5 32 ♕e2 ♖f7 33 c4 ♗h4 34 ♖f1



34...♘e7

According to Dvoretsky, this is a definite positional mistake: 'Why exchange the "superfluous" white knight at b4? True, after 34...e4!? (with the idea of ...♕e5-d4) many years later Yuri Yakovich pointed out a very strong reply: 35 ♖a3! (threatening ♖e3), and if 35...♗g5, then 36 f4! (not 36 f3 ♕e5) 36...♗f6 37 g4 ♕e6 38 ♔h1 followed by 39 ♖e3. Therefore Black does better to restrict himself to the waiting move 34...♗g5!, and if 35 ♖fa1, then either continue waiting tactics (35...h5; 35...♗h4), or nevertheless play 35...e4!?, not fearing 36 ♖e1 ♗h4 37 ♕b2+ ♕e5 38 ♕xe5+ dxe5 39 g3 ♗f6 40 ♘xf6 ♖xf6 41 ♖xe4 ♘d6 with a probable draw.'

In my view, retaining the linkage of the white knights would also have threatened Black with serious unpleasantness. Thus if 34...♗g5 35 ♖fa1 e4 36 ♖e1 ♗h4, then 37 g3 ♗d8 38 ♘c2 is very strong, when the 'superfluous' knight successfully comes into play: 38...♗a5 39 ♘ce3 ♕xh3 40 ♕b2+ ♔g8 41 ♖a1 ♗d8 42 ♕d4. White's total domination in the centre, combined with the activity of his rooks, makes Black's position barely defensible, for example: 42...♕e6 43 ♖1a6! ♕e5 44 ♕xe5 dxe5, and a sudden leap by the knight decides the game – 45 ♘c3! ♗g5 46 ♘xe4

♗xe3 47 ♘xc5 ♖xf2 48 ♘e4! Things are also difficult for Black after 35...♗h4 (instead of 35...e4) 36 g3 ♗d8 (the piece sacrifice 36...♕xh3 is insufficient: 37 gxh4 ♕xh4 38 ♘c3 ♘b6 39 ♖8a7) 37 h4.

35 ♖a6

The immediate 35 ♘xe7 ♗xe7 36 ♘d5 would have allowed Black to bring his rook, stuck at c5, back into play – 36...♖c8!

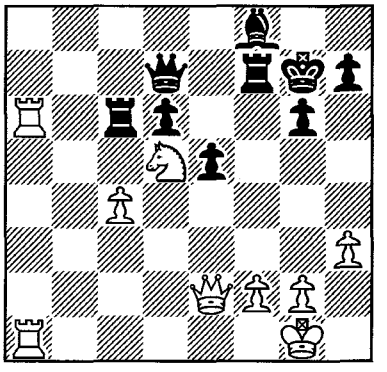
35...♕d7?

This move suggests itself, but it deserves serious criticism – Black is unable to hold out by passive play. The best practical chance was the pawn sacrifice 35...♘xd5 36 ♘xd5 e4! 37 ♖xd6 ♕e5 38 ♖a6 ♕d4, activating the pieces with chances of a draw.

36 ♕e4 ♘xd5 37 ♘xd5 ♗e7 38 ♖fa1 ♗f8

Black can no longer activate his game – 38...♕f5 39 ♕e2 ♗h4 40 g3.

39 ♕e2 ♖c6



40 ♖6a3!

Karpov's ability to see the entire board is staggering. After doubling rooks on the a-file, he suddenly sharply changes the direction of the attack and makes an unexpected manoeuvre, which decisively strengthens his position. Since Black does not have a more useful move than the return of his rook to c5, White removes the rook at f7 from the game, thereby weakening the defence of the king. His other rook can now threaten not only to invade on the a-file, but also to switch to the kingside via a3 and f3. What becomes noticeable here is the dominating role of the knight at d5, which prevents the rook at c5 from returning in time to the aid of its king, leaving it performing the role of an observer.

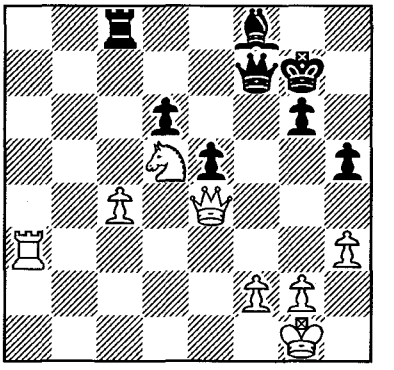
40...♖c5 41 ♖f3! ♖xf3 42 ♕xf3 ♕f7 43 ♕g4 h5

Black is forced to go in for this new weakening, in order to safeguard his monarch.

44 ♕e4 ♖c8

After 44...♔h7 a shuttle raid by the rook concludes the battle: 45 ♖a3 ♗g7 46 g4! ♕d7 47 ♖f3! (the technical endgame after 47 gxh5 ♕f5 48 hxg6+ ♕xg6+ 49 ♕xg6+ ♔xg6 50 ♖g3+ ♔f7 51 ♖g4 is too small a reward for such a successful campaign) 47...hxg4 48 hxg4 ♕e6 49 ♖a3! ♕f7 50 ♖f3 ♕e8 (50...♕e6 51 ♘f6) 51 ♖f6! Nothing is changed by 44...♔h6 45 ♖a8 ♗g7 46 g4!

45 ♖a3



45...♕f5

This prevents the invasion of the rook on the f-file, but it now strikes a blow from the opposite flank. After 45...♖b8 46 ♖f3 the counter-invasion 46...♕b7 47 ♔h2 ♕b1 is ineffective: 48 ♕h4 ♕c1 49 ♕f6+ ♔h7 50 ♕f7+ ♗g7 51 ♕c7 ♖b1 52 ♖f7 ♕g1+ 53 ♔g3 ♖b3+ 54 f3 h4+ 55 ♔xh4 ♕f2+ 56 g3 and wins. After 46...♕d7 47 ♖f6 ♕e8 the win of the queen by 48 ♘c7 ♔xf6 49 ♕f3+ ♔e7 50 ♘xe8 ♖xe8 gives Black hopes of setting up a fortress, but the energetic 48 f4! quickly forces capitulation: 48...exf4 49 ♖e6 ♕f7 50 ♘xf4.

And in the event of 46...♕e6 (perhaps the toughest defence) White should not win either the queen (47 ♖f6 ♕xf6), or a pawn (47 ♘f4 ♕f5 48 ♕xf5 gxf5 49 ♘xh5+ ♔g6 with counterplay). After 47 ♕h4! e4 (47...♖b7 48 ♖f6 ♗e7 49 ♖xe6 ♗xh4 50 g3) 48 ♖e3 ♕e5 49 ♕xe4 the win is technically simple.

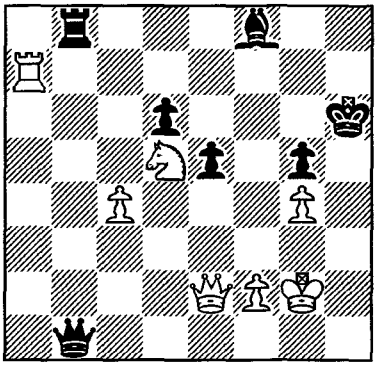
46 ♖a7+ ♔h6

If 46...♔h8 the elegant tactical blow 47 ♘f6! is decisive, taking play into a simply won queen endgame: 47...♕xf6 (47...♗g7 48 ♕b7 ♕xf6 49 ♕xc8+ is also hopeless) 48 ♕b7! ♕g7 49 ♕xc8 ♕xa7 50 ♕xf8+ ♔h7 51 ♕xd6.

47 ♕e3+ g5 48 ♕e2 ♖b8 49 g4! hxg4?!

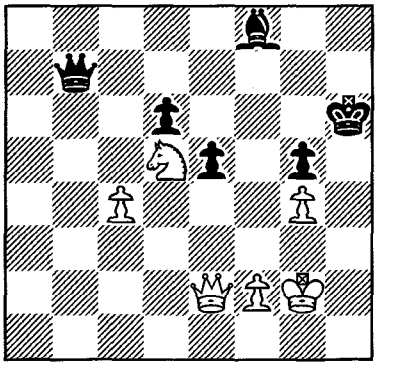
Even so, Black should not have opened the h-file. The immediate 49...♕b1+ 50 ♔g2 ♖b7 51 ♖xb7 ♕xb7 was more tenacious, although after 52 ♕f3 ♗g7 53 gxh5 the game would have gone into an endgame where Black has no way of opposing his opponent's light-squared domination.

50 hxg4 ♕b1+ 51 ♔g2



The black queen has been sidelined, White has acquired an outpost at f5 for his knight, and the route a7-a3-h3 is open for the rook. It is not possible to weaken the terrible effect of this manoeuvre by 51...e4 52 ♖a3 ♔g6, since after 53 c5! Black cannot take the pawn (53...dxc5? 54 ♕a6+!), and 53...♖c8, the only seemingly acceptable continuation, allows a pretty concluding attack: 54 ♕c4! ♖xc5 55 ♕d4! ♗g7 56 ♘e7+ ♔f7 57 ♕xd6 etc. Therefore Black's desire to exchange rooks is logical and appears to be a measure that eases his position.

51...♖b7 52 ♖xb7 ♕xb7



53 ♕f3!

It transpires that the black queen is unable to come to the aid of its king on account of a trivial mate: 53...♕g7 54 ♕h3+ ♔g6 54 ♕h5. There are hardly any pieces left on the board, but the difference in the strengths of the two small armies is such that the battle concludes immediately.

53...♕c8 54 ♕f6+ ♔h7 55 ♕f7+ 1-0

If 55...♔h8, then 56 ♘f6 is decisive, while if 55...♔h6 – 56 ♘e3.

In the next round Karpov lost with Black to Ribli, and the second half of the tournament developed into a sharp race with Timman. In the penultimate, 13th round the champion had White against Ribli and, taking account of the tournament situation, was eager for immediate revenge.

And – very typical of Karpov – again the result was a textbook example on the accumulation of minute advantages combined with inexorably increasing pressure, which in the end broke the opponent's will to resist.

Game 82

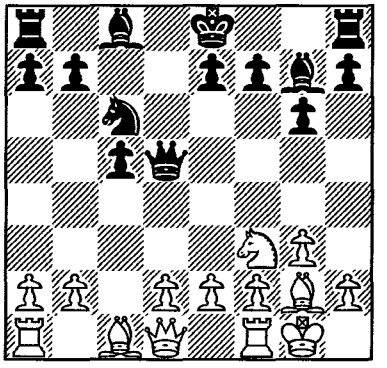
A.Karpov-Z.Ribli

Amsterdam 1980, 13th round

English Opening A38

1 c4 (again serving from the left!) **1...c5 2**

♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 ♘c6 4 g3 d5 5 cxd5 ♘xd5 6 ♗g2 g6 7 0-0 ♗g7 8 ♘xd5 ♕xd5



This variation, which is not without venom, is one that Karpov played with both colours, and he had an excellent knowledge of its subtleties.

9 d3 0-0 10 ♗e3 ♗d7!

This move (instead of the earlier 10...♕d6), which first occurred in the game Timman-Olafsson (Amsterdam 1976), forced it to be admitted that here there are no particular difficulties for Black. After seeing it at the board, Karpov immediately remembered how the source game had gone and, after some thought, devised a novelty (see below).

11 ♘d4

Standing at d5, the queen keeps the a2-pawn under fire, not allowing the white rook to come into play. But it cannot advantageously be driven away: 11 ♘d2 ♕h5, or 11 ♘g5 ♕e5. Interesting complications can arise unexpectedly quickly for such an colourless set-up after 11 ♕c1 b6 12 d4 cxd4 13 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd5 ♘xe2+ 15 ♔g2 ♘xc1 16 ♗xa8 ♗xb2 17 ♖b1 ♗f6! 18 ♖fxc1 ♖xa8, and the situation is discharged (Bagirov-Tukmakov, Tbilisi 1978).

11...♕d6 12 ♘xc6 (12 ♘b5 ♕e5) **12...♗xc6 13 ♗xc6 ♕xc6 14 ♖c1 ♕e6**

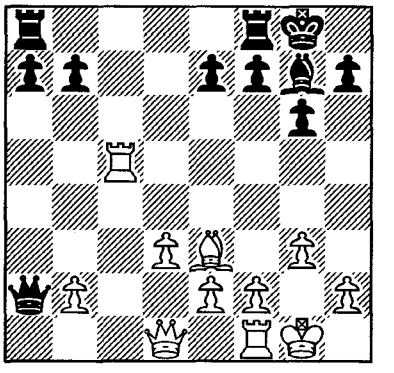
The critical position. Black is threatening to consolidate by 15...b6, and White cannot defer the capture of the c5-pawn.

15 ♖xc5

Black has no problems after 15 ♗xc5 ♗xb2 (or 15...♕xa2 16 ♗xe7 ♖e8 17 ♗a3 ♗xb2 with equality – Karpov) 16 ♖b1 ♗g7 17 a4 ♖fd8 18 ♗e3 b6 19 ♕d2 ♖d5 (Timman-Olafsson, Amsterdam 1976).

15...♕xa2

Karpov considers the position after 15...♗xb2 16 ♖b5 ♗f6 17 ♕a4 to be favourable for White. After 17...♕d7 18 ♖a5 ♕xa4 19 ♖xa4 ♖fc8 20 ♖b1 b6, as in the game, Black would have had to defend an inferior endgame.



16 ♖b5!?

'An innovation, thought up by me during the game.' (Karpov). It does not claim to refute Black's opening set-up, but it sets him new problems.

16...b6

An acceptable reaction, but not the best. There was a clearer way to equalise – 16...♕a6! 17 ♕b3 b6 18 ♖b4 ♖fc8 19 ♖a4 ♕b7 20 ♖fa1 h5! (Ehlvest-Polugayevsky, Reggio Emilia 1991), or 18...♖fb8 19 ♖c4 b5 20 ♖c7 e6 21 ♖fc1 h5 with an unclear game (Andersson-Timman, Ubeda 1997).

17 ♕a1!

Exploiting the fact that, with the pawn on b2, the a1-square is inaccessible to the black bishop, White wants to tie the rook at a8 to the defence of the a7-pawn. If this rook were able to switch to the 7th rank, the conflict would be exhausted.

17...♕xa1?

With the aim of 'drying' the play and concluding peace as soon as possible, Black condemns himself to suffering in a position where his best option will already be to go into a rook endgame a pawn down. Undoubtedly '17...♕e6 was preferable' (Karpov) – with the queens on it is easier to hold such a position: 18 ♕a4 ♖fc8 19 ♖b4 ♕d5 20 ♖a1 ♕h5 (Hansen-Sutovsky, Esbjerg 2001).

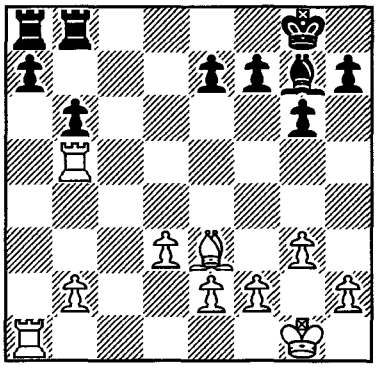
Of course, when analysing the position in a calm situation, one can resolve the simple problems posed by 16 ♖b5 without particular difficulty. But at the board Zoltan Ribli was unable to find the correct way, although at that time, at the peak of his career, he was famed for his subtle positional understanding.

18 ♖xa1

It transpires that Black lacks a tempo to prevent the invasion of the rook at a6, which is extremely unpleasant with his rook on a8. Suddenly he finds himself in difficulties.

18...♖fb8

Ribli adopts a passive stance, intending to finally remove the rook from a8 after 19...♖b7. There is nothing for this rook to do on the open c-file: 18...♖fc8 19 ♖a6! ♖c2 20 b3 ♖xe2 21 ♖bxb6 (Karpov) 21...♖e1+ 22 ♔g2 ♖a1 23 ♖xa1 ♗xa1 24 ♖a6.



19 ♖a6!

Now 19...♖b7 leads to the loss of a pawn and an extremely unpleasant rook and bishop endgame: 20 ♖bxb6! ♖xb6 21 ♗xb6 ♗xb2 22 d4! e5 23 d5.

19...♔f8 20 ♖b4! ♗e5 21 ♖ba4!

Subtle. 'If 21 b3 Black would manage to defend – 21...♗c7 22 ♖ba4 ♖b7.' (Karpov)

21...b5?

The decisive mistake. Now the transition into the difficult endgame '5 against 4' becomes a dream, the fulfilment of which depends entirely on White's desire. According to Karpov, '21...♗xb2 22 ♗xb6 ♖b7 23 ♗xa7 ♖c8 should have been preferred, when it is not at all easy for White to win this endgame.'

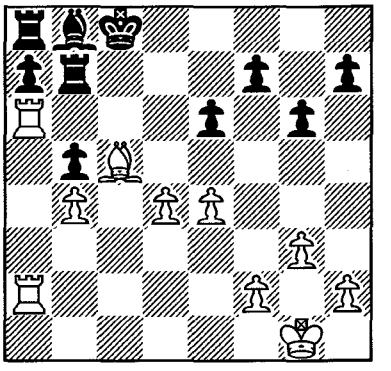
22 ♖a2 ♖b7 23 b3!

A warning signal for Black. Rather than the immediate win of a pawn by 23 ♗xa7 ♗xb2 24 ♖xb2 ♖axa7 25 ♖xa7 ♖xa7 26 ♖xb5, Karpov prefers positional pressure, continuing to wear down his opponent.

23...♗b8 24 ♗c5 (now Black has also been deprived of the c-file) **24...♔e8 25 d4 ♔d7 26 e4!**

Karpov: 'A fairly committing decision, which demanded deep calculation. After 26 d5 Black could have been forced to go into a rook endgame – 26...♗d6 27 ♗xd6 exd6, which looks completely won for White.' But he justifiably wanted more.

26...e6 (the black bishop can no longer go to d6) **27 b4 ♔c8**



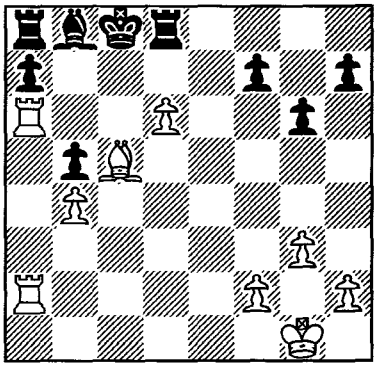
28 d5!

Karpov 'did not care for 28 ♔g2 ♖d7 29 ♖6a5 ♗d6! 30 ♖xb5 ♗xc5 31 ♖xc5+ ♔d8!, when White's king does not manage to defend his far-advanced pawns.' Indeed, in the rook

endgame after 32 d5 exd5 33 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 34 exd5 Black acquires a ray of hope: 34...a6 35 ♔f3 ♖b8 36 ♖xa6 ♖xb4.

28...exd5 29 exd5 ♖d7 (not 29...♗e5? because of 30 ♖e2 – Karpov) **30 d6 ♖d8**

Black's pieces are stalemated, and now the white king comes into play.



31 ♔g2 ♔d7

'In the event of passive defence – 31...♔b7 White must win by breaking through with his king via the kingside: 32 ♔f3 ♖e8 33 ♔f4 h6 34 h4 etc.' (Karpov). For example: 34...♔c8 35 ♖2a5 ♔b7 36 h5 gxh5 37 ♔f5 ♖e6 38 f4 ♖g6 39 ♖a3 ♔c8 40 ♖d3 ♔d7 41 ♖e3 and wins.

If 31...♖e8, then 32 d7+ ♔xd7 33 ♖f6 (Karpov) is possible, and although Black can complicate his opponent's task somewhat by 33...a5! 34 bxa5 ♖e5 35 ♗b4 ♔e8, all the same White is close to victory: 36 ♖b6 ♗a7 37 ♖b7 etc. However, the importance of the black rook's activation should not be overrated: 32 ♔f3!? ♖e6 33 ♖2a5 ♔b7 34 ♔f4 h6 35 h4 – as in the variation with 31...♔b7 the white king breaks through into the enemy position (35...♖e1 36 h5 etc.).

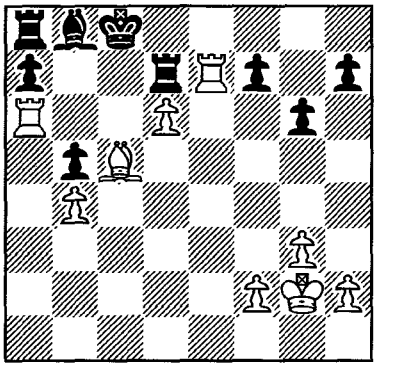
32 ♖e2!

There was also a win by 32 ♖2a5 ♔e6 33 ♖xb5 ♖d7! 34 ♖ba5! (Karpov considers only 34 ♖a2 ♗xd6, when 'the position is not so clear') 34...♗xd6 35 ♗xa7, but with the move in the game White does not allow the opponent to disentangle himself normally.

32...♔c8

In the event of 32...♖e8 33 ♖xe8 ♔xe8 34 ♔f3 (Karpov) 34...♔d7 35 ♔e4 ♔e6 36 g4 the black army makes a pitiful spectacle.

33 ♖e7 ♖d7



34 ♖a2!

The decisive rook manoeuvre, whereas the incautious 34 ♖c6+? ♔b7 35 ♖xd7+ ♔xc6 36 ♖xf7! (36 ♖d8 a5 Karpov) 36...a5! would have allowed Black good saving chances: 37 ♖xh7 ♗xd6 38 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 39 bxa5 ♖xa5 40 ♖g7 b4 41 ♖xg6+ ♔c5.

34...a5 (34...♔d8 35 ♗b6+; 34...♗xd6 35 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 36 ♖d2) **35 ♖c2 1-0**

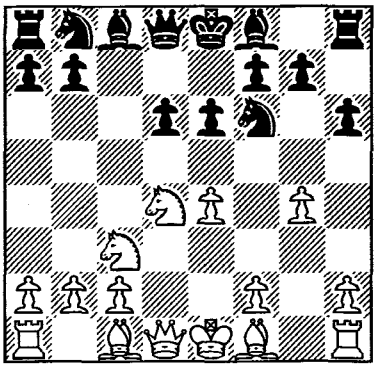
The ease with which Karpov defeated the best grandmasters in the world, in what appeared to be completely harmless positions, still creates a great impression.

A win at the finish over Larsen put everything in its place: 1. Karpov – 10 out of 14 (+7–1=6); 2. Timman – 9; 3. Sosonko – 8; 4. Hort – 7½; 5-6. Dolmatov and Ribli – 7, etc.

A considerable stir was also caused by the champion's second successive victory at the autumn super-tournament in Tilburg. Initially in the 2nd round he defeated Ribli with Black – revenge again! In the 3rd round he unexpected lost with White to Larsen (*Volume 4, Game No.48*), but then 'in his anger' he inflicted defeats on Timman, Hübner, Andersson and Spassky! Against the ex-world champion Karpov again extracted the evergreen Keres Attack from his armoury.

Game 83
A.Karpov-B.Spassky
Tilburg 1980, 9th round
Sicilian Defence B81

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 e6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 g4 h6 (6...♘c6 – *Game No.50*; 6...♗e7 – *Game No.71*)



7 h4

Later Karpov turned to 7 ♖g1 (*Game No.89*), whereas he abandoned 7 g5 hxg5 8 ♗xg5 after two games with Andersson (Skara 1980; Bugojno 1980), where Black equalised with 8...♘c6 9 ♕d2 ♕b6 10 ♘b3 a6 11 0-0-0 ♕c7 followed by ...♗d7, ...♗e7, ...0-0-0, ...♔b8, ...♗c8 and ...♘g8!?

7...♘c6 8 ♖g1 d5!?

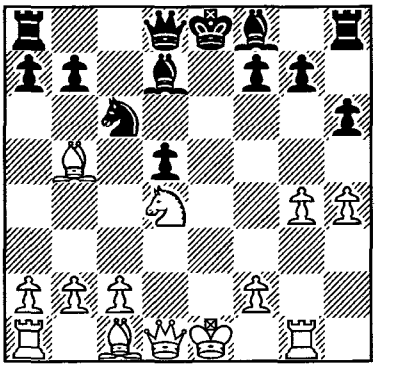
'The most critical continuation, if Black is aiming for an active battle in the centre. Otherwise, by advancing his g-pawn on the next move, White would have driven back the knight from f6.' (Karpov)

Another thrust is more often employed – 8...h5. In the 1st game of our 1984/85 match Karpov played 9 gxh5, and after 9...♘xh5 10 ♗g5 ♘f6 11 ♕d2 ♕b6 12 ♘b3 ♗d7 13 0-0-0 a6 (a set-up similar to that employed by Andersson – cf. above) I successfully solved my opening problems (more details about this in Volume 7).

9 g5 ♘g4 10 ♗e2 runs into the counter 10...d5!, which was devised by the Hungarian grandmaster Andras Adorjan, who was famed for his interesting style of play and even more for his original discoveries in many openings. I analysed this idea with him before my first match with Karpov, and its viability was confirmed by one of Andras's games: 11 ♘xc6 bxc6 12 ♗xg4 hxg4 13 ♕xg4 d4 14 ♘e2 e5! (Sznapik-Adorjan, Dortmund 1984).

9 ♗b5 ♗d7 10 exd5 ♘xd5 (if 10...exd5, then 11 ♕e2+ ♗e7 12 ♗e3 a6 13 ♗d3 is quite good for White) **11 ♘xd5 exd5**

Simplification such as 11...♘xd4 12 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 13 ♕xd4 ♕xd5 14 ♕xd5 exd5 leads after 15 ♗e3 to a tedious position where it is hard for Black to display any activity. He can probably defend, but why play such an opening set-up?



12 ♗e3!

'Development first and foremost! There was another tempting possibility – 12 ♕e2+, which after 12...♕e7 13 ♗e3 ♘xd4 14 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 15 ♗xd4 would have led to some advantage for White, but after 12...♗e7 13 ♘f5 ♗xf5 14 gxf5 ♔f8 the position does not seem so clear to me.' (Karpov)

12...♗e7

It looks risky to play 12...♕xh4 13 ♕d2! (in my opinion, the best move, not allowing simplification) 13...♗e7 14 0-0-0. But after the preparatory 12...a6! 13 ♗a4 the pawn may prove perfectly edible: 13...♕xh4 14 ♕f3 ♕e7 15 0-0-0 ♕e4 16 ♕g3 0-0-0 17 ♘xc6 ♗d6! 18 ♕xd6 ♗xc6 19 ♕g3 ♕xa4.

13 ♕d2

'13 ♕e2 was also possible, trying to exploit the open position of the black king. True, then too White is subjected to danger along the undefended a5-e1 diagonal, and also in some cases along the e-file. Black would have had a choice between 13...♕a5+ 14 c3 ♘xd4 15 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 16 ♗xd4 ♖he8 and 13...0-0 14 0-0-0 ♕a5, which after 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 ♔b1 looks more promising for White.' (Karpov)

However, in my view, after 16...♗xh4 White has to work rather hard to demonstrate that he has compensation for the pawn (say, 17 f4 ♖fe8 etc.). Instead of 15 ♗xc6 he can play 15 ♔b1 immediately, but after 15...♘xd4 16 ♗xd4 ♕xb5 17 ♕xe7 ♖fe8 18 ♕a3 ♖ac8 Black has a sound position (19 g5?! h5, and the c2-point becomes the target for a counter-attack).

And after 13 ♕f3 0-0 14 ♗xc6 bxc6 15 g5 Black seizes the initiative with the pawn sacrifice 15...h5! 16 ♕xh5 ♕a5+ 17 c3 ♖ab8.

13...♗xh4?!

'Formerly, as I recall, the ex-world champion would not even have looked at such a pawn, but times change, and a liking for extra pawns can arise even with players such as Spassky. However, Black's desire to get rid one of the pawns impending over his position is determined by a desire to remove his king to the flank, which if done immediately is dangerous: 13...0-0 14 ♘f5 ♗f6 15 0-0-0, and it is hard for Black to parry the threats.' (Karpov). And indeed, 15...d4? already loses to 16 ♗xh6 gxh6 17 ♕xh6.

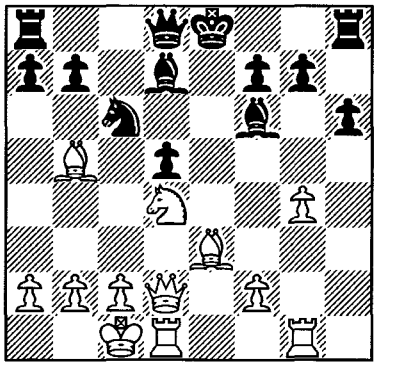
However, one of the main experts on Scheveningen set-ups, Ulf Andersson (who in recent years has played more in correspondence tournaments) found the clever defence 14...d4!, after which in the complications 15 ♗xh6 ♗b4 16 c3 dxc3 17 bxc3 ♘e5! 18 ♗e2 ♖e8 19 ♔f1 ♗f8 20 ♗f4 ♕a5 Black gained excellent compensation for the sacrificed pawn (Timmerman-Andersson, correspondence 1995-97).

The move in the game completely hands the initiative to White.

14 0-0-0 ♗f6?!

After the relieving 14...♘xd4 15 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 16 ♗xd4 0-0 Black runs the danger of coming under a crushing attack: 17 ♖h1! ♕d8 18 ♖dg1! ♗f6 19 g5 ♗xd4 20 ♕xd4 (20 gxh6? ♕b6! 21 c3 ♗xf2) 20...hxg5 21 ♕d3 f5 22 ♖h5 ♕d7 23 ♖hxg5 ♖f7 24 ♕h3 and wins.

It seems to me that the best decision (as on the previous move) was to castle. Of course, after 14...0-0 the reply 15 g5 looks threatening. Now 15...♘xd4 is met by the strong 16 ♕xd4!, when Black loses after both 16...♗xb5? 17 gxh6 ♗f6 18 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 19 ♕f4 ♗d7 20 ♗d4, and 16...♗xg5? 17 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 18 f4. And in the event of 16...hxg5 17 ♗xd7 ♕xd7 18 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 19 ♖xg5 f6 20 ♖h5 White's attack is very strong. 15...hxg5 is more cautious, and if 16 ♗xg5 ♗xg5 17 ♖xg5, then not 17...♘xd4? because of 18 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7 19 ♕xd4+ f6 20 ♖g1+ ♔f7 21 ♕xd5+ ♗e6 22 ♕xb7+ ♕e7 23 ♖g7+, but 17...♕f6 – in this position there is still all to play for. 15 ♘f5 may prove more unpleasant, when after 15...d4 16 ♗xc6 dxe3 17 ♕xe3 bxc6 18 ♘xh4 ♕xh4 19 ♖xd7 Black faces a laborious defence.

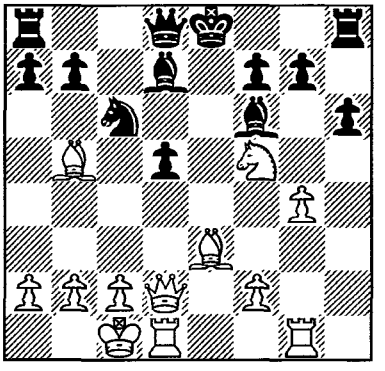


15 ♘f5!?

It is not at all easy for White to develop his initiative – Black has no weaknesses on the kingside, and in addition his king is not yet there! On the one hand, the knight move is good, in that White opens the g-file, practically

ruling out kingside castling by Black (on the queenside too the king will not be secure); in addition White is ready to capture the d5-pawn. On the other hand, one of the main attacking pieces is exchanged, and the price for opening the g-file is the loss of a possible pawn storm.

Karpov rejected the obvious 15 f4, after failing to find a clear advantage after 15...♕a5 16 ♕xa5 ♘xa5 17 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7, and only after the game did he discover that 'by 18 ♘f5! White would have gained excellent chances.' Computer verification has shown that Karpov was right: 18...♔c6 19 ♗d4 ♗xd4 20 ♖xd4 with advantage to White. 15...♕c7 is no better on account of 16 g5 hxg5 17 fxg5 ♗e5 18 ♘f3 0-0-0 19 ♗xc6 ♗xc6 20 ♘xe5 ♕xe5 21 ♗xa7. To avoid the worst, Black should again go into an endgame – 21...♖h2 22 ♗d4 ♖xd2 23 ♗xe5 ♖xd1+ 24 ♖xd1, but here too he faces an extremely unpleasant defence.

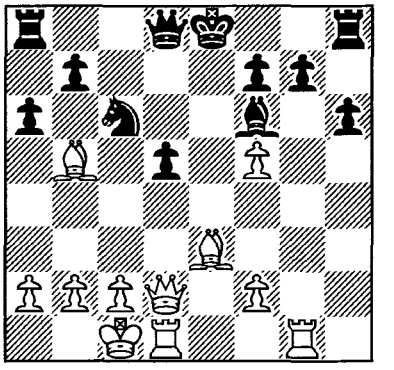


15...♗xf5

It is no longer possible to castle: 15...0-0? 16 ♘xh6+! gxh6 17 g5! ♗e5 18 f4 ♗c7 19 gxh6+ ♔h8 20 ♕xd5 ♕e7 (20...♗e6 21 ♕g2!) 21 ♗c5 ♗xf4+ 22 ♔b1 ♕e5 23 ♗xf8 and wins.

16 gxf5 a6

Spassky intends to preserve his d-pawn as compensation for the difficulties experienced. Going into an ending – 16...♕d7!? 17 ♕xd5 ♕xd5 18 ♖xd5 a6 gave him a chance of equalising after 19 ♗xc6+ bxc6 20 ♖d6 ♖c8, thanks to his passed h-pawn (21 ♖e1 ♔f8 22 ♖d7 h5 23 ♖a7 h4 24 ♖xa6 h3). But by 19 ♗a4! b5 20 ♗b3 ♘e7 21 ♖d3 ♘xf5 22 ♗c5 ♖c8 23 ♖e1+ ♘e7 24 ♗d6 Karpov could have retained the two bishops, the initiative, and real chances of success.



17 ♗xc6+?

A strange exchange: Black's pawn bastion in the centre is supported, and he acquires the real possibility of hiding his king at c7 or c8 and of using the b-file for a counterattack.

'It is always regrettable to give up such a bishop, but White has no time to retreat it, since then the d-pawn would advance, and Black would calmly remove his king to f8, and if necessary to g8.' (Karpov). Here he is insufficiently concrete. With this development of events the rook at h8 remains out of play for a long time and both white bishops become very active: 17 ♗a4! b5 (here 17...♕d7 is weaker than on the previous move, since apart from 18 ♕xd5 White has the very unpleasant 18 ♗b6! ♕xf5? 19 ♕b4) 18 ♗b3 d4 19 ♕e2. Now, after both 19...♔f8 20 ♕h5 ♕e7 21 ♗f4 ♖d8 22 ♖ge1 and 19...♕e7 20 ♕f3 ♖c8 21 ♗f4 ♘e5 22 ♕g3 White has a powerful initiative.

17...bxc6 18 ♗c5

In the event of 18 ♗d4 the fact that the d5-pawn is defended allows Black to set up a defence with the active participation of his king: 18...♗xd4 19 ♕xd4 ♕f6 20 ♕c5 (20 ♕b4

♔d7! 21 ♕b7+ ♔d6!) 20...♔d7! 21 c4 ♖hb8! 22 ♖d2 ♕e7 23 ♕d4 ♕f6 24 ♖xg7 ♕xd4 25 ♖xd4 ♔e7 26 cxd5 cxd5 27 ♖xd5 ♖b5 with an imminent draw.

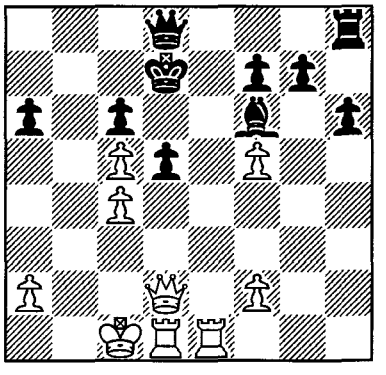
18...♖b8 19 b4!?

Sharp and interesting play; to support his fading initiative, White decides to give up his main trump – the secure shelter of his king. After the quiet 19 b3 ♖b5 20 ♗d4 Black defends by simple means: 20...♗xd4 21 ♕xd4 ♕f6 22 ♖ge1+ ♔f8 23 ♖e5 ♖b8 (in the event of 23...♔g8 24 ♖e8+ ♔h7 25 ♕xf6 gxf6 26 ♖e7 ♖f8 27 ♖c7 the rook endgame is nevertheless advantageous to White) 24 ♖g1 (24 ♖de1 ♔g8) 24...h5!? and the position is not clear (only, if 25 ♖ge1, instead of 25...h4?? 26 ♕b4+, he should move his king – 25...♔g8).

19...♖b5?

When Karpov advanced his b-pawn, he thought that the opponent was obliged to sacrifice the exchange. But this is not so – the worst was already over for Black, and 19...♔d7! would have emphasised this. Both kings are poorly sheltered, and White also has to be cautious, for example: 20 ♕e2? a5 21 c4 axb4! 22 cxd5 ♕a5! 23 dxc6+ ♔c8 24 ♔b1 b3 25 a3 ♖b5, and Black goes onto the attack. 20 c4 ♔c7 21 cxd5 cxd5 22 ♕d3! is stronger – White still holds the initiative, but the outcome is hard to predict in this double-edged position.

20 ♖ge1+ ♔d7 21 c4 ♖xc5 22 bxc5



22...♗g5?

This fatal mistake was the result of Black overestimating his own chances. The outwardly risky move 19 b4 must have excited Spassky, and he decided to punish his presumptuous opponent. Karpov also rated his own position very optimistically and considered 22...♕b8 to be the most appropriate reply, when he was intending 23 cxd5! (23 f4?! ♔c8! 24 cxd5 cxd5 25 ♖e2 ♖d8 with chances for both sides) 23...♗g5 24 ♖e3, 'when Black has to seek salvation in the variation 24...♗xe3 25 fxe3 ♕e5 26 dxc6+ ♔xc6 27 ♕d7+ ♔xc5 28 ♕a7+ ♔b5.' But here there is no salvation: 29 ♕b7+ ♔c5 30 ♖d2! ♕a1+ 31 ♔c2 ♕xa2+ 32 ♔d1 ♕a4+ 33 ♖c2+ ♔d6 34 ♕c7+ ♔d5 35 ♕c5+ ♔e4 36 ♔e2! ♕b5+ 37 ♖c4+. The consequences of 25...♖d8 26 dxc6+ ♔e7 are not so catastrophic, but things are very difficult for Black in the queen endgame: 27 ♕c2 ♖xd1+ 28 ♕xd1 ♕c7 29 ♕d5 h5 30 ♔d2.

Even so, Black had a possibility of seriously hindering his opponent's task – 22...♕f8! After the forced 23 ♕b4 he can take play into an endgame: 23...♕b8 24 ♕xb8 ♖xb8 25 cxd5 ♖b5 (or 25...a5 26 ♖e4 cxd5 27 ♖xd5+ ♔c6 28 ♖d3 ♔xc5 29 ♖a4!) 26 dxc6+ ♔xc6 27 ♖d6+ ♔c7 28 ♖xa6 ♖xc5+ 29 ♔d1 ♖xf5 30 ♔e2, and it is still not easy for White to win.

23 f4 ♕f6!

It was on this unexpected riposte that Spassky was pinning his hopes. Now it is not possible to block the diagonal by natural means: 24 ♖e5? ♕xe5! 25 fxe5 ♗xd2+ 26 ♖xd2 ♖e8, and it is not easy even for White to save himself. But...

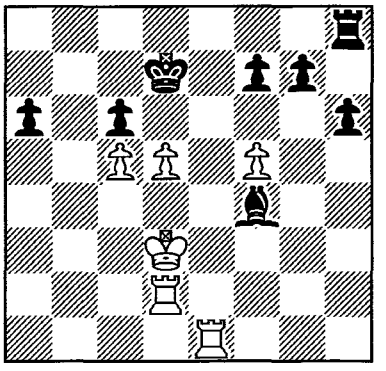
24 cxd5!

Apparently Spassky underestimated this capture, and had been counting beforehand on 24 fxg5? ♕a1+ 25 ♔c2 ♕xa2+ with a winning attack: 26 ♔d3 ♕xc4+ 27 ♔e3 hxg5!, or 26 ♔c1 ♕a1+ 27 ♔c2 ♕a4+ 28 ♔c1 ♖b8! He noticed his oversight when it was too late, although the logic of the struggle should have suggested to him that any winning variations here for Black were accidental, and he should have carefully checked them before basing his decisions on them.

24...♕a1+ 25 ♔c2 ♕xa2+ 26 ♔d3 ♕xd2+

26...♕b3+ 27 ♕c3 ♕b5+ 28 ♕c4 ♗h4 was more tenacious, but after 29 ♖g1 ♗f6 30 d6 the win for White is merely a question of time.

27 ♖xd2 ♗xf4



28 ♖a2!

This concludes the game. The threat of d5-d6 does not allow Black to defend his a6-pawn, after which both White's rooks and his king become terribly active.

28...cxd5 29 ♖xa6 h5 30 ♔d4 h4 31 ♔xd5 ♖b8 32 f6 gxf6 33 ♖xf6 ♗g3 34 ♖xf7+ ♔d8 35 ♖f8+ 1-0

The effect of this game was such that for a time 8...d5 went out of use, and in similar situations the advance ...d6-d5 began to be regarded with great suspicion.

A draw at the finish with Tal secured the champion a new success: 1. Karpov – 7½ out of 11 (+5–1=5); 2. Portisch – 7; 3. Timman – 6½; 4-5. Sosonko and Spassky – 6; 6. Tal – 5½, etc.

On the background of these almost continuous successes the only slight cloud was a share of 4th-5th places at a tournament in Buenos Aires and a loss with White against Timman in a sharp variation of the Sicilian Defence. Here Larsen and Timman finally achieved their cherished dream – they finished ahead of the world champion, by taking the first two places.

Immediately after this Karpov headed the USSR team at the Olympiad (Malta, November-December 1980) and scored +6=6. I was the second reserve in that event and it was only with enormous difficulty, on the tie-break, that we finished ahead of the strong Hungarian team. The gold medals were secured by the last-round Karpov-Jacobsen game, which was adjourned in a difficult rook endgame and accurately won by our leader on the resumption.

In 1981, shortly before the next match for the world championship, when it had already transpired that his opponent would again be Korchnoi, the champion initially played in a match-tournament of four Soviet teams (here, for the first time, I battled with him one-to-one: the outcome was two fighting draws), and then in three strong tournaments – Linares (1-2. Christiansen and Karpov – 8 out of 11; 3. Larsen – 7), Moscow (1. Karpov – 9 out of 13; 2-4. Kasparov, Polugayevsky and Smyslov – 7½) and Amsterdam (1. Timman – 7½ out of 11; 2-3. Karpov and Portisch – 7).

To judge by the number of wins, and above all by their quality and diversity of style, the 30-year-old Karpov was in optimal form and looked the favourite in the forthcoming battle for the crown.

'There are no easy Matches'

The match in Merano (autumn 1981), in contrast to Baguio, is remembered by Karpov 'with tenderness and pleasure: the countryside, the people, the unsurpassed organisation of the event; and also the victory itself was beautiful, unequivocal, rapid...' But at the time, immediately after his win, he stated: 'The match, although it turned out to be short, demanded both intensity and serious nervous stress. There were practically no short draws: in every game, apart from the 17th, the battle went on to the "bare" kings. Therefore the match has to be called difficult – but strictly speaking, there are no easy matches for the world championship.'

The world champion's preparations were on an unprecedented comprehensive and fundamental scale. Igor Zaitsev relates:

'During the three years separating Baguio from Merano the number of those wishing to help us in our work increased. And here it was not at all the matter of a pro-Karpov and anti-Korchnoi mood – the participation itself in analytical preparations for top-level events was considered highly prestigious *(but often also obligatory – G.K.)*. And I, in my capacity as the world champion's senior trainer, did everything to expand the circle of voluntary helpers. I thought that even a brief chess association with new people would enrich Karpov's style, and make it more universal and flexible.

'This also ensured a continuity of views, which is extremely important for any great chess player: in the course of his formation he has to pass through his perception all the development stages of the centuries-old chess thinking. The arrangement of such knowledge continuity is essentially the basis of all training work. This is the guarantee of a professional's many years of tournament stability, whereas gaps in his knowledge give rise to crises and failures.

'Immediately before Merano the core of our training group remained the same. Balashov and I were again appointed as seconds, but an active part in the general analytical preparation was played by Tal, Polugayevsky (they also travelled to Merano), Geller and Vaganian. At various times we were joined by Ubilava, Mikhalchishin, Tseshkovsky, Kapengut, Kimelfeld, Lepyoshkin and Rozenberg, and one of the sessions was visited by Georgy Borisenko, a creative associate of Furman and an elder statesman of Soviet theoreticians, whom we all, from Karpov downwards, regarded with particular respect.

'Anticipating serious opposition in the opening, we endeavoured to learn the lessons of Baguio and on this occasion we stored up a great number of important and minor theoretical surprises (although, as it later transpired, not all the ideas were brought up to the necessary condition). Evidently relying on this, in the last year before the match Anatoly involved himself more in public affairs, and since the training brigade consisted mainly of active players, who regularly went off to various events, sometimes I had to spend the training sessions virtually in proud isolation.

'On one such inopportune January day in 1981 the higher authorities, in the persons of the Sports Committee chairman Pavlov and the Central Committee secretary for sport Gramov, suddenly turned up out of the blue. On seeing such a strange desolation, they began benevolently, but very insistently and naggingly, questioning me about the course of the preparations. But when I fetched out our chess notes, which for the uninitiated were double-dutch, the impressive appearance of the thick notebooks, crammed with numerous variations, greatly calmed them down.

'Rumours to the effect that in the period of the matches with Korchnoi we were all held under some kind of special constraint, do not accord with reality: there were no strong measures or dressings-down at all.

'The main training session before our departure took place in Plavinas in Latvia on the banks of a picturesque forest lake. Here we were able both to work fruitfully and to relax well, and build up our physical strength.

'Autumn in Italy greeted us with mild sunny weather and persistent attacks by temperamental journalists. Our delegation was accommodated in a comfortable three-story villa where, much to everyone's joy, there was even a swimming pool. True, when the building warmed up, repulsive black crabs – scorpions! – began to crawl out of all the crevices. This was a real shock. To carry out a serious analysis under such conditions was uncomfortable, to say the least. What misfortune – in Baguio we had been pursued by earthquakes and typhoons, and here we came across these creatures! Fortunately, it was explained to us

that they are poisonous only in May. And little by little we calmed down, although the scorpions remained with us right to the end of the match...

'As is usual in such matches, intensive analysis took place at night – especially if by morning it was necessary to urgently crack some opening problem or find the optimal solution in an adjourned position. In contrast to Baguio, there were only four of the latter – in the 2nd, 4th, 5th and 8th games.

'Nowadays we have all become accustomed to a game concluding in one sitting. However, in those years the matches were still played with an adjournment after forty moves. This had its pluses: it was in the course of work on unfinished games that the art of analysis was perfected. But what a hellish strain, usually at night, was placed on the shoulders of the trainers!... When studying the specific features of games with adjournments, even before Merano I established that the adjournment, like the right of the first move, is a small but undoubted advantage for White: he can be the first to exploit – or, according to circumstances, not exploit – his right to seal a move! I informed Karpov of this observation, hoping that it would come in useful to him. Later, precisely because of this additional trump for White, I took the abolishment of adjournments to be a logical and just act.

'It is easy to work out that in an unlimited match it is always advantageous to have the white pieces in the first game. Therefore, when sending Karpov off to the drawing of lots, our parting words were like those of fastidious mushroom-gatherers: "Pick only the white!" But it turned out the other way round...'

The white pieces in the first game went to Korchnoi, but this did not help him. Karpov very confidently handled the Tartakower-Makogonov-Bondarevsky Variation of the Queen's Gambit: he was not afraid to go in for a position with hanging pawns at c5 and d5, he made a timely exchange of the enemy dark-squared bishop (by ...♘f6-h5xg3), and after a mistake by White on the 24th move he carried out the typical ...d5-d4 breakthrough with great effect and scored an excellent win. Geller: 'After this the champion gained a serious psychological advantage.'

In the 2nd game Korchnoi tried to surprise his opponent with a rare defence in the Ruy Lopez, but this resulted in a somewhat inferior position without any real counterplay – Karpov's forte! 'He completely outplayed his opponent positionally. It became clear that the challenger's defence – never his strong weapon – was on the point of collapse, and that he was unable to withstand the champion's systematic, although outwardly unhurried offensive. One must mention the exceptional coordination that the white pieces achieved in this game,' writes Geller, who seven years earlier, if you remember, was not enraptured by Karpov's style.

After a draw in the 3rd game, Karpov also won in subtle positional style in the 4th game, where again, as in the 6th game of the Moscow match (1974), the Petroff Defence occurred. But in Moscow things ended in a swift rout, whereas after the 22nd move in Merano the champion 'would not have objected to sharing the point, had not Korchnoi introduced the procedure of offering a draw via the arbiter'. But at that moment the challenger chose a dubious plan, and his position began to deteriorate move by move...

Just four games – and already three of the six required wins! Balashov: 'Hardly anyone could guess Karpov's moves – this is an indication of his good form.' Tal: 'Karpov ran half of the distance with lightning speed!'

At that point Viktor Lvovich began complaining of feeling unwell – he was convinced that there was some reason for this and that, he reckoned, the Soviets were irradiating him with something. But this is what Alexander Roshal, who was then the Soviet delegation's press attaché, has to say regarding this today:

'I know nothing about any influence on

Korchnoi. In Merano there was with us an important psychologist, Kabanov. He spent a long time questioning me about how Zukhar had behaved in Baguio. When I told him of how our doctor had acquired a high opinion of himself, Kabanov smiled: "Well, that won't happen with me." But within a week he asked me to collect cuttings of articles in the foreign press, where his name was mentioned. I don't know, perhaps he needed this for his report...

'As in Baguio, there were indeed many accompanying us – however, not to frighten the opponent, but for requirements of a largely technical nature: security, protection against "bugging", and so on. In Merano everything was much simpler than in the Philippines. Korchnoi was already a spent force, and it was clear to everyone that Karpov would win the match. It was another matter when, after a series of wins, Karpov lost the 6th game, and subsequently also the 13th, and in the Sports Committee they became slightly alarmed (suppose Baguio were to repeat itself?) and began fussing about – they activated the Moscow "support group" and appealed to grandmasters for assistance...

'Emmanuel Sztein, the press attaché of the challenger's delegation, later recalled in an interview that I had supposedly said to him when we met: "We're going to annihilate you!" I don't remember the exact words, but I could indeed have promised him that we would make mincemeat of them. In this there was not simply confidence, but absolute conviction about our victory. I remember that I said to him: "Today the difference in playing strength between Korchnoi and Karpov is the same as between you and me!" (incidentally, despite the "warring camps", my relations with Sztein remained perfectly correct).

'But Korchnoi often sought the cause of his defeats outside of himself, and justified them by the interference of certain outside forces or simply chance, the good fortune of his opponent... Vishy Anand once said to me: 'I have won about fifteen games against him, without any losses, and after each one of them he informed me that I have no idea about chess.' Such a habit also occurred with other great players, but with Korchnoi, in my view, it has gone to extremes.

'Therefore, in talking about "secret radiation", Viktor Lvovich is flattering himself: there was nothing of the sort. And whereas I remember Baguio as being one of the most gripping and dramatic of events, Merano is more associated with the sunny ocean, the visit to Venice, and son on. Here we were able to permit ourselves a completely different way of life, not so secluded and monotonous.'

After his disastrous start Korchnoi nevertheless managed to come to his senses – he made several draws and even gained quite a good win (*Game No.35*), but in the 9th game he was struck another powerful blow.

Zaitsev: 'Korchnoi's three painful defeats at the start were nothing to do with the opening: Karpov outplayed his opponent in the later stages of the game. But the next three wins were associated to a considerable degree with home preparation. First of all, there was a purely Karpov-like idea in the 9th game, which many remember for the manoeuvre 11...♘h5! Here the world champion's distinctive style is clearly seen.'

Game 84
V.Korchnoi-A.Karpov
World Championship Match,
Merano 1981, 9th game
Queen's Gambit D53

1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 ♗e7 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 ♗g5 h6 6 ♗h4 0-0 7 ♖c1 dxc4!

One of the most valuable novelties in the match. Later experience showed that, in return for the temporary conceding of the centre, Black gains the opportunity to develop his queenside pieces comfortably.

8 e3

Black also equalises after 8 e4 ♘c6! (the essential point of the plan with 7...dxc4) 9 e5 (9

♗xc4? ♘xe4 10 ♗xe7 ♘xc3 11 ♗xd8 ♘xd1 12 ♗xc7 ♘xb2 favours Black) 9...♘d5 10 ♗xe7 ♘cxe7 11 ♗xc4 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 b6 (Tukmakov-Beliavsky, Tilburg 1984).

8...c5 9 ♗xc4 cxd4 10 exd4

If 10 ♘xd4, then 10...♗d7! leads to an equal game, for example:

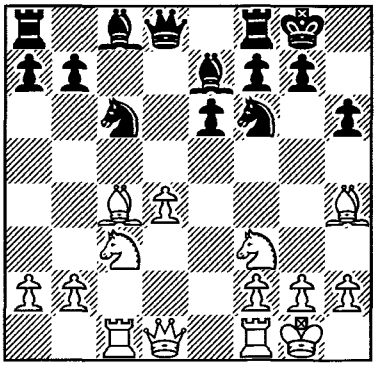
1) 11 ♗e2 ♘c6 12 ♘b3 ♘d5 13 ♗xe7 ♘cxe7 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♕d4 ♗c6 16 ♗f3 ♘e7 (Korchnoi-Karpov, 17th matchgame, Merano 1981);

2) 11 0-0 ♘c6 12 ♘b3 ♖c8 13 ♗e2 ♘d5 14 ♗xe7 ♘cxe7 15 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 16 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 17 ♕d4 ♕b8 18 ♗f3 ♘f6 19 ♘c5 ♗b5 20 ♖d1 b6 (Karpov-Kasparov, 23rd matchgame, Moscow 1984/85);

3) 11 ♗g3 a6 12 e4 ♘c6 13 ♘b3 b5 14 ♗d3 b4 15 ♘a4 ♘e5 16 ♗xe5 ♗xa4 (Ivanchuk-Gelfand, Dortmund 1997).

10...♘c6 11 0-0

It is curious that the same position, only with the rook on e1, was reached – moreover, from another opening! – in the 11th game of the second Karpov-Kasparov match (1985), and that extra tempo, which enabled the rook to stand on e1, played a decisive role (cf. Volume 7).



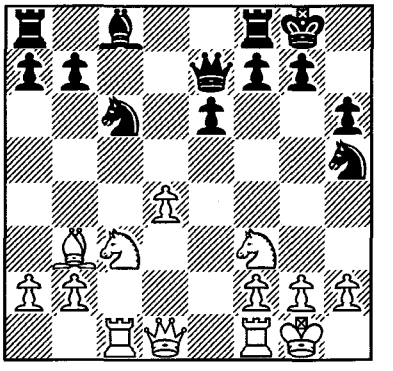
11...♘h5!

An important detail of Black's opening construction. After the exchange of the dark-squared bishops, his knights completely control the d5-square.

12 ♗xe7 ♘xe7 13 ♗b3?!

On encountering a strong novelty, White should have curtailed the game and at home sought a more effective reaction to 7...dxc4, or even taken a critical look at the virtues of 7 ♖c1. 'I gained the impression,' writes Karpov, 'that here Korchnoi realised he had not extracted any advantage from the white pieces and had lost the opening battle, but that as though from inertia he was continuing to seek ways of playing for a win. It is for this reason that he avoids the simplification which would be inevitable after d4-d5.'

The opening of the centre 13 d5 exd5 14 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 15 ♕xd5 (or 15 ♗xd5 ♘f4 16 ♗e4 ♗e6) 15...♕xd5 16 ♗xd5 does not prevent Black from completing his development: 16...♘f4 17 ♗c4 ♗e6 18 g3 ♖ac8 with a rapid draw (Uhlmann-Kurajica, Sarajevo 1982).

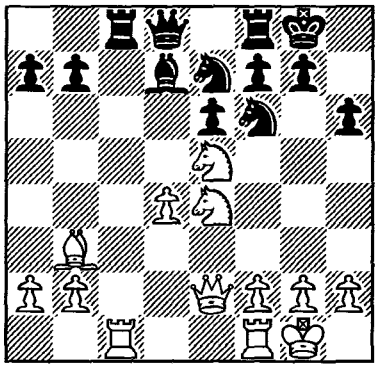


13...♘f6 14 ♘e5 ♗d7 15 ♕e2 ♖c8 16 ♘e4?!

From this moment Korchnoi's position begins to deteriorate with every move. 'White is unable to find a clear-cut plan and he overlooks the fact that each exchange of minor pieces potentially weakens his d4-pawn.' (Karpov)

To this I should add that, when there are just heavy pieces on the board, an isolated pawn is always and only a weakness. But White's main problem is that it is very hard for him to find a 'clear-cut plan' – one that does not in the end lead to a similar exchange of minor pieces and to the even more obvious

weakness of the d4-pawn. For example, 16 ♖fe1 ♖c7!? (Karpov; but not 16...♗c6? 17 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 18 ♕xe6) 17 ♖cd1 ♗c6, and here 18 ♘xf7 ♖xf7 19 ♗xe6 ♘ed5 is no longer advantageous to White, while after 18 ♘b5 ♗xb5 19 ♕xb5 ♘ed5 it is far easier to guess Black's next few moves.



16...♘xe4 17 ♕xe4

After 17 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 18 ♕xe4 there is a well-known method of play: 18...♗c6! 19 ♘xc6 ♕xc6 20 ♕xc6 bxc6! 21 ♖d1 ♖b8!, letting it be known that it is hard to get rid of the weak d4-pawn. 'Black's knight is capable both of securely defending his own pawn and of attacking the enemy d-pawn, whereas the functions of the white bishop are restricted.' (Karpov)

17...♗c6 18 ♘xc6 ♖xc6!

'This way, so that White should not be able, without making some concession (for example, conceding the c-file), to switch his rooks to the kingside.' (Karpov)

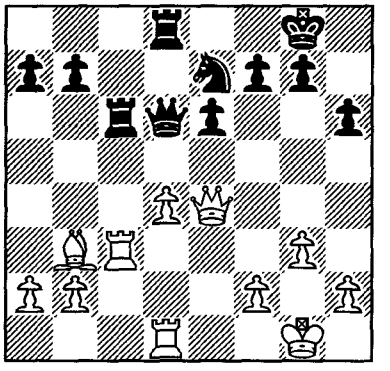
19 ♖c3?!

An important moment. 'Korchnoi spent a long time considering the consequences of the exchange on c6, and in the end he evidently realised that he had underestimated the factors outlined above.' (Karpov). The absence of the dark-squared bishop, which could have defended the d4-pawn from e3, makes things difficult for White, and he now has to try and draw from a position of weakness: 19 ♖xc6 bxc6! (an idea that is familiar to us from the 10th game of the Lasker-Capablanca match, *Volume 1, Game No.90*) 20 ♖c1 ♕b6 21 ♖c4! ♖d8 22 g3. I think that with accurate play this is a quite feasible task.

19...♕d6 20 g3?!

Karpov thinks that with this move White lost his 'prospects of play on the kingside'. If he had any, then it seems to be that they were lost much earlier. And, if he was thinking of how to save the game, it was better to regroup along the lines of 20 ♖xc6 (20 ♗c2 g6) 20...bxc6 21 ♖c1 ♖d8 22 ♖c4 – after 22...♘f5 23 ♖xc6 ♕xd4 24 ♕e2 Black's initiative is not yet threatening.

20...♖d8 (now the position has strategically clarified to Black's obvious advantage) **21 ♖d1**



21...♖b6!

Karpov avoids the exchange, in order to later intensify the pressure on the d4-pawn. And, to all appearances, the fate of this pawn is now decided (as Larsen aptly remarked: isolated pawns should not be blockaded, but won!). Korchnoi does not see where he could display any activity, and so he is forced to switch to passive defence.

22 ♕e1 ♕d7!

Consistently implementing the plan of intensifying the pressure on the d4-pawn.

23 ♖cd3

The belated activation attempt 23 ♖c5 is refuted tactically: 23...♖d6 24 ♖dc1 ♘c6! 25 ♗a4 ♘xd4! 26 ♗xd7 ♘f3+.

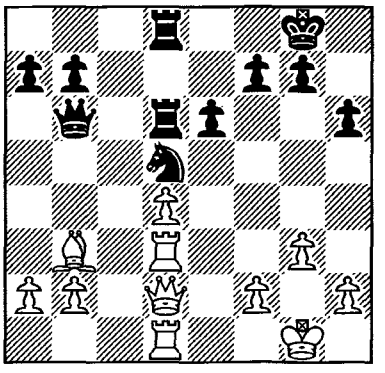
23...♖d6 24 ♕e4 ♕c6 25 ♕f4

The exchange of queens leads to the loss of a pawn: 25 ♕xc6 ♘xc6 26 d5 ♘b4, or 25...bxc6 26 ♗c4 (26 g4 c5) 26...♘f5.

25...♘d5!

Now the queen cannot stand on an active square – 26 ♕e4 ♘b4! – and is forced to take up a less favourable position (it cannot move away from the queenside: 26 ♕h4 a5 27 a4 b5!).

26 ♕d2 ♕b6!



27 ♗xd5?!

Short of time, Korchnoi does not want to undermine the stability of his bishop by moving his a2-pawn, and he decides to parry the threat of ...♘d5-b4 in the simplest way. The position after 27 a3 ♘e7 28 ♕f4 ♘c6 29 d5 e5 30 ♕e3 ♘d4 is also advantageous to Black, but possibly this was the lesser evil.

27...♖xd5 28 ♖b3?!

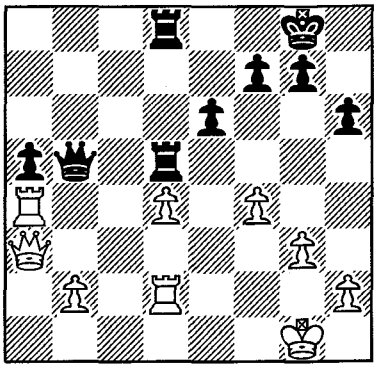
All the same a new weakening, to prevent ...e6-e5, cannot be avoided, and therefore the immediate 28 f4 was more tenacious, not moving the rook off the d-file: 28...♖8d7 29 ♕f2 ♕d8 30 ♕e3.

28...♕c6 29 ♕c3 ♕d7 30 f4 b6! 31 ♖b4 b5! 32 a4 bxa4 33 ♕a3 a5 34 ♖xa4

White has won the battle for the a4-pawn, but at too high a price: his main forces are stuck on the queenside.

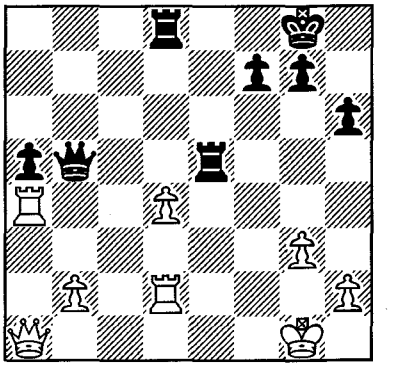
34...♕b5! (the invasion of the queen at e2 threatens in an instant to destroy White's position) **35 ♖d2**

It was no better to play 35 b3 (with the idea of 35...♕e2 36 ♕c1), agreeing to go into a bad rook endgame after 35...♖b8 36 ♖d2 ♕xb3 37 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 38 ♖da2 ♖bb5. But Korchnoi does not want to give up a pawn, and besides, as in the game 35...e5 36 fxe5 ♖xe5 was also possible.



35...e5! 36 fxe5 ♖xe5 37 ♕a1

Of course, not 37 dxe5? ♖xd2 38 ♖xa5 ♕e2. White only needs to make one move, and his queen, by standing at d1, will stabilise the position for a time...



37...♕e8!

A splendid manoeuvre, exploiting to the maximum both the vertical and the diagonal possibilities of the strongest piece. White's position collapses like a house of cards.

38 dxe5 (38 ♖d1 ♖e2 loses immediately) **38...♖xd2 39 ♖xa5**

There is no hope of setting up even a sem-

blance of a defence after 39 ♕e1 ♕d8 40 ♕e3 ♕d5! 41 ♖e4 ♖d3 42 ♕f4 g5! 43 ♕f5 (43 ♕g4 ♖d1+ 44 ♔f2 ♕c5+ 45 ♖e3 ♖d2+ 46 ♔f3 ♕c2) 43...♖d1+ 44 ♔f2 ♕d2+ 45 ♖e2 ♕d4+ 46 ♔g2 g4!

39...♕c6 40 ♖a8+ ♔h7 41 ♕b1+ g6 42 ♕f1 (a last test of Black's vigilance: if now 42...♕xa8?? then the reply 43 ♕xf7+ forces a draw) **42...♕c5+ 43 ♔h1 ♕d5+ 0-1**

In view of the inevitable 44 ♔g1 ♖d1 White resigned.

With the score standing at 4-1 after the ninth game, only a miracle could save Korchnoi. His nerves, to all appearances, were at breaking point. Karpov: 'He insulted me during the 8th and 9th games. In the 10th he was probably afraid that the arbiters would install microphones and record his words, and so he simply talked rubbish.'

Rude Pravo (Czechoslovakia): 'During the 9th and 10th games the world champion had to raise his hand five times as an indication that he was requesting the chief arbiter Paul Klein to come to the board. Klein: "During play Korchnoi swore at Karpov in Russian, insulted him and besmeared his country. We several times reprimanded Korchnoi." The play and correct behaviour of the world champion is in sharp contrast with Korchnoi's behaviour.'

UPI News Agency: 'After the 12th game Karpov accused the challenger of having "shouted insulting words at him" and of constantly preventing him from concentrating, by intentionally waving his hands. In reply to this complaint, Korchnoi said that he had merely asked Karpov not to swivel in his chair and not distract him.'

At three o'clock in the morning after the 12th game Baturinsky handed Gligoric, the chairman of the appeal jury, a written protest by the world champion with the required deposit of 500 Swiss Francs. The following day the jury gave the challenger an official warning, and informed him that 'a similar repeat violation would be penalised by a fine of 15,000 Swiss Francs.'

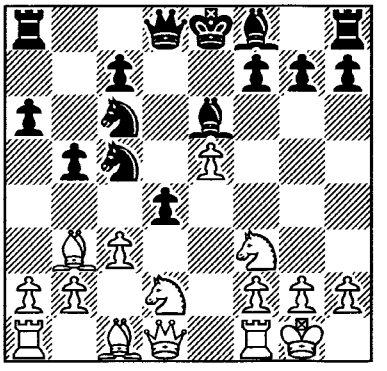
But these outbursts were merely a pale shadow of the previous match... After his win in the 13th game (*Game No.36*) a faint ray of hope for Korchnoi appeared, but the very next game showed that here there would be no 'second Baguio'.

Yuri Razuvaev, who was at that time working as coach for the USSR Sports Committee, remembers: 'Late one evening, after the 6th game, Geller and I were suddenly summoned to Ivonin, the deputy head of the Sports Committee, and asked to report the following morning to his office, in order to "urgently devise for Tolya some novelty in the Ruy Lopez." True, at the same time, he enquired: "Is this possible?" Geller replied: "Well, we'll try." The following morning, in the corner of his enormous office, we saw a writing desk, and on it – a chessboard and pieces, pens and clean sheets of paper. Alongside, on a trolley, were bottles of mineral water and caviar sandwiches. As soon as Geller and I sat down to analyse, Ivonin said in a business-like way: "Well, everything seems to be in order. I won't disturb you." And he went out, locking the door behind him... The analysis took us the whole of the working day. That was how the idea 13 ♘e4!? was born. I wrote all our variations on the sheets of paper and handed them to Ivonin...'

Zaitsev: 'In the 14th game there occurred one of the two venomous, although transitory novelties in the Open Variation of the Spanish, which decided the outcome of the match. That day an interesting idea of Geller was used, one that he had discovered together with Razuvaev – 13 ♘e4!? True, in order to decipher the notes, hand-written on sheets of paper, and present this discovery to Karpov in a suitable form, I had to sacrifice a desirable trip to Venice, which our entire delegation visited during a three-day break.'

Game 85
A.Karpov-V.Korchnoi
World Championship Match,
Merano 1981, 14th game
Ruy Lopez C80

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 ♘bd2 (avoiding 9 c3 – *Game Nos.35 and 75*) **9...♘c5 10 c3 d4**



11 ♗xe6

'In the 10th game of the match in Baguio, Karpov played 11 ♘g5!?, but, as subsequent games and analyses showed, in this case Black has sufficient counterplay,' wrote Polugayevsky, with no suspicion of the knight move's future popularity.

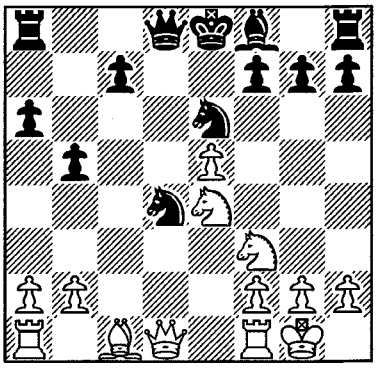
11...♘xe6 12 cxd4

Neither 12 a4 dxc3 13 bxc3 b4 14 ♕c2 ♕d5! (G.Kuzmin-Dorfman, 46th USSR Championship, Tbilisi 1978), nor 12 ♘b3 dxc3 13 ♕c2 ♕d5 14 ♖d1? ♘b4! 15 ♕e2 ♕c4! (Sax-Tal, Tallinn 1979) sets Black any serious problems.

12...♘cxd4 13 ♘e4

This is one of those novelties which helped to break the resistance of Korchnoi, who was on the point of 'reviving'. The effect of such surprises is very strong, since in the course of the match it is hard for the opponent to find a worthy antidote. Then he has to change his main opening, and the reserve one may not always be equivalent in terms of quality and degree of preparedness.

Usually 13 ♘xd4 ♕xd4 was played, for example: 14 ♕e2 ♖d8 15 a4 ♕d5! 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♕e4 (not 17 ♖a5? ♗b4! 18 ♖xb5 ♘d4) 17...♗c5 18 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 with an excellent endgame for Black (Adams-Anand, 2nd matchgame, Linares 1994). Eighty years before this after 14 ♕f3 ♖d8 15 a4 (not 15 ♕c6+ ♕d7 16 ♕xa6 ♗b4!) 15...♕d5 16 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♖a8+ ♘d8 19 ♘e4! ♖xe5 20 ♖d1 ♗e7 21 f3 ♖f5?! 22 ♖c8 White for a long time held the initiative in a similar type of ending (Capablanca-Lasker, St Petersburg 1914), but soon the best prescription became known – 15...♗b4! with equality.



13...♗e7

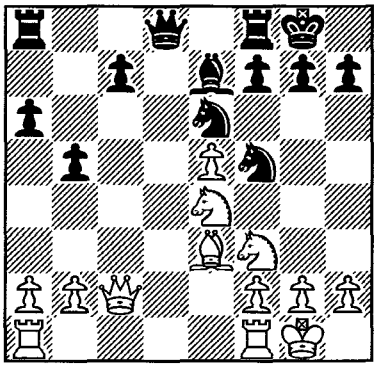
Korchnoi thought for 79 minutes over this move, establishing what was then a record for world championship matches. I managed to beat this dubious achievement, when in the opening of the 2nd game of my match with Karpov in Seville (1987) I thought for 83 minutes!

On encountering another surprise, Korchnoi preferred to make the move that was most useful, even on general grounds. The other typical manoeuvre 13...♕d5?! was rightly condemned by Karpov: after 14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 15 ♘c3 ♕d7 16 ♗e3 ♗c5 17 ♕h5 or 14...♕xe4 15 ♘xe6 fxe6 16 ♕h5+ g6 17 ♕h3 White firmly seizes the initiative.

14 ♗e3 ♘xf3+?

Essentially the only mistake in the game, but at the same time an irreparable one. One can't help remembering the 2nd game of their 1974 match and Korchnoi's losing move 19...♖4c5? immediately after an opening novelty by the opponent (*Game No.67*).

It is obvious that the knight cannot be maintained in the centre: 14...c5 15 b4! (with the sequel 15...♘xf3+ 16 ♕xf3 c4 17 ♖fd1 ♕c8 18 ♘d6+ ♗xd6 19 exd6 0-0 20 d7). However, its exchange is also bad, merely assisting the rapid activation of the white forces. In his next 'black' game Korchnoi found the correct way – 14...♘f5! 15 ♕c2 0-0.



Analysis diagram

16 ♘eg5 ♗xg5! 17 ♘xg5 g6 18 ♘xe6 fxe6 19 ♖ae1 ♕d5 20 b3 ♖ac8 with equality. Later White tried much more often to fight for an advantage by 16 ♖ad1!? ♘xe3 17 fxe3 ♕c8 and then, mainly, 18 ♘d4 or 18 h3:

1) 18 ♘d4 ♘xd4 19 exd4 ♕e6! 20 ♘g3! (20 ♕xc7 ♖ac8 21 ♕a5 ♖c2 with excellent compensation) 20...c6 (it is amusing that the trap 20...f6? 21 ♘f5! fxe5? 22 ♕b3! 1-0 ensnared two strong grandmasters: Tseshkovsky-Yusupov, Erevan 1982; Chandler-Nunn, Naestved 1985) 21 ♘f5 ♖fe8 22 ♖d3 ♗f8 23 ♖h3 g6 24 ♘h6+ ♗xh6 25 ♖xh6 c5 with equality (Short-Yusupov, Montpellier Candidates 1985);

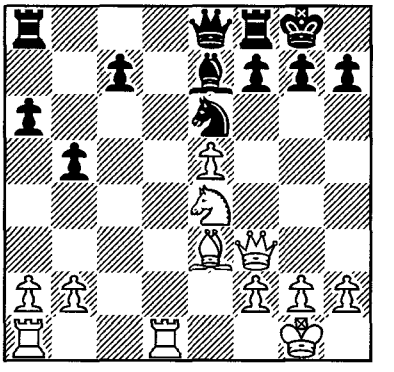
2) 18 h3 ♖d8 19 ♘h2 ♖xd1 20 ♕xd1 ♕e8! (the game Geller-Tal, Sochi 1986, went 20...♘c5, and here, in Tal's opinion, 21 ♕d5! would have given White the advantage) 21 ♕h5 ♘c5 22 ♘g3 a5! 23 ♘f5 ♖a6 24 ♘g4 ♖g6, seizing the initiative (Tal-Korchnoi, Reykjavik 1987).

15 ♕xf3 0-0 16 ♖fd1

The most logical move, strengthening White's position in the centre. Karpov hesitated for a long time before making his choice, since he wanted to keep his rook on the f-file and advance his f2-pawn. But this could have reduced the effect of the opening novelty and led to an unclear position: 16 ♕g3?! ♕d5! 17 ♘f6+ ♗xf6 18 exf6 ♕f5 19 fxg7 ♖fd8 (Karpov), or even 18...g6 19 ♕h4 ♕f5.

16...♕e8

The queen has not managed to jump to d5 and is now forced to huddle on the back ranks. Karpov thinks that Korchnoi did not choose the least of the evils. However, other queen moves – 16...♕c8 17 ♖ac1 ♖d8 18 ♘d6 ♗xd6 19 exd6 or 16...♕b8 17 ♕g4 c5 18 f4 ♕c7 19 ♘d6 – also lead to situations where hopes of saving the game are associated only with a possible mistake by the opponent.



17 ♘f6+! ♗xf6

The consequences of 17...gxf6? 18 exf6 ♗d6 19 ♖d4! followed by 20 ♖h4 are too transparent.

18 exf6 ♕c8 19 fxg7

For the moment there is no crushing attack – 19 ♕g3 ♖d8 20 f4? g6 21 f5 ♘f8, and Karpov chooses a continuation which in the end

leaves White a pawn up.

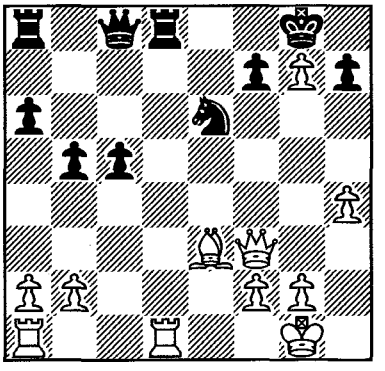
19...♖d8

Of course, not 19...♔xg7? 20 ♗h6+! ♔xh6 21 ♕f6+ with mate, while after 19...♘xg7 White not only picks up the c7-pawn (20 ♖ac1 or 20 ♕g3), but can also create an attack against the weakened castled position. Korchnoi does not intend to give up his c-pawn, and he hopes that the white pawn at g7 will defend his king against a frontal attack.

20 h4

Karpov saw that there was nothing to stop the pawn advancing to h6, but at the same time he allows Black a little activity. The winner criticises himself, thinking that 'the prophylactic move 20 b4 should have been considered, so as to halt all Black's play and in the end force him to take the g-pawn, exposing his king.'

20...c5



21 ♖ac1

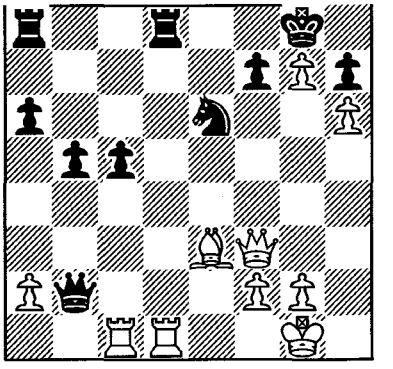
'Technically the strongest solution was 21 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 22 ♖d1 ♘d4 23 ♗xd4 cxd4 24 ♕e4!, and the h-pawn advances unhindered.' (Karpov)

21...♕c7 22 h5

'Engrossed in my idea, I allow the opponent to activate his pieces at last and to gain counterplay,' writes Karpov. 'I should have continued 22 ♕f6! ♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♖d8 24 ♖xd8+ ♕xd8 25 ♕xd8+ ♘xd8 26 ♗xc5; while 22 b4 c4 23 h5 was also quite good.'

But there is no reason for such self-reproach – White's position is easily won all the same.

22...♕e5! 23 h6 ♕xb2



It was this position that Karpov had aimed at from afar. But, in his words, 'I had evidently underestimated something: I had to think for a long time.'

24 ♖d7

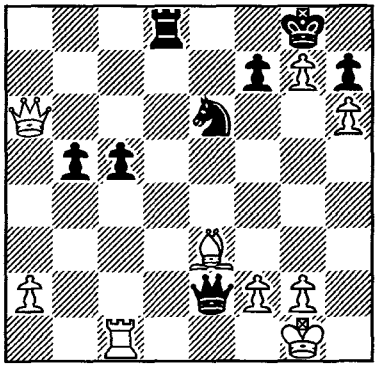
A spectacular move, which also wins the a6-pawn. 'Apparently the only move... In the event of 24 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 25 ♖xc5 ♕xa2 26 ♖d7 Black has the reply 26...♖ab8 27 ♕f4 ♖a8.' (Karpov)

However, surrounded by the g7- and h6-pawns, the king still falls prey to the white pieces: 28 ♖e7 ♕b1+ 29 ♔h2 ♕g6 30 ♖f5 ♖d4 31 ♕e3! ♖dd8 32 ♖exf7 ♕xf7 33 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 34 ♕f3+, and 34...♔g6 is not possible because of 35 g4. Instead of 27...♖a8 Black can immediately enlist the aid of the queen with 27...♕e6. Then 28 ♖cd5! ♖e8 (if 28...♕e8, then 29 ♕xf7+ ♕xf7 30 ♖xd8+ ♕e8 31 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 32 ♖d7 – the path for the f2-pawn is open: 32...b4 33 f4 b3 34 ♖b7) 29 g3 (avoiding 29 ♖5d6 ♕e1+ 30 ♔h2 ♕e5) 29...♖b7 (after 29...b4 30 ♖5d6 ♕a2 White most easily approaches the f7-point with 31 ♔g2 followed by 32 ♖d5) 30 ♖7d6 ♕e1+ 31 ♔g2 ♖be7 32 ♖xa6 b4 33 ♖b6, and Black also loses his b-pawn.

I should also mention the immediate 24...♕xa2. Here too White achieves his aim, by exploiting the threat of invading the back

rank: 25 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 26 ♗b6 ♕d2 (26...♖b8 27 ♕b7!) 27 ♕c6 ♖b8 28 f4! (not immediately 28 ♕c8+ ♘d8; with 28 f4 White has defended the h6-pawn in the variation 28...b4 29 ♕c8+ ♘d8 30 ♕xb8 ♕xc1+ 31 ♔h2) 28...♕xf4 29 ♕c8+ ♘d8 30 ♖e1! Karpov was undoubtedly right when he advanced his pawn to h6!

24...♖xd7 25 ♕xa8+ ♖d8 26 ♕xa6 ♕e2!



27 ♖f1?!

Black was threatening perpetual check, but it is only now that he gains some counterplay.

Karpov avoided the natural 27 g3 because of 27...♘d4 28 ♗xd4 cxd4, coming to the conclusion that 'Black parries the mating threats and the d-pawn becomes dangerous.' It seems to me that the win is not difficult here: 29 ♕f6! ♕e8 (29...♖a8 30 ♕xd4 ♕xa2 31 ♕d7 ♕a6? 32 ♖c6) 30 ♖c7 ♖d7 31 ♕c6 ♖d8 32 ♕xe8+ ♖xe8 33 ♖d7. It is possible that White also wins even by 28 ♖xc5 ♘f3+ 29 ♔g2 ♘e1+ 30 ♔h3 ♕f1+ 31 ♔g4. The waiting move 27...♕b2 is more tenacious, although White should not experience any serious problems, for example: 28 a4 bxa4 (or 28...b4 29 ♕b6 b3 30 ♖xc5 ♕a1+ 31 ♔h2 ♕xa4 32 ♖e5) 29 ♕xa4 ♘d4 30 ♖xc5 ♕b1+ 31 ♔h2 ♘f3+ 32 ♔g2 ♘e1+ 33 ♔h3 ♘d3 34 ♖f5 ♕h1+ 35 ♔g4 – here the king is safe, and White converts his material without particular difficulty.

27...♖d1 28 ♕a8+ ♖d8

'But not 28...♘d8 because of 29 ♖xd1 ♕xd1+ 30 ♔h2 ♕h5+ 31 ♔g3 ♕g6+ 32 ♔h4 ♕f6+ 33 ♔h3! ♕e6+ 34 g4 – the checks come to an end, and White wins.' (Karpov)

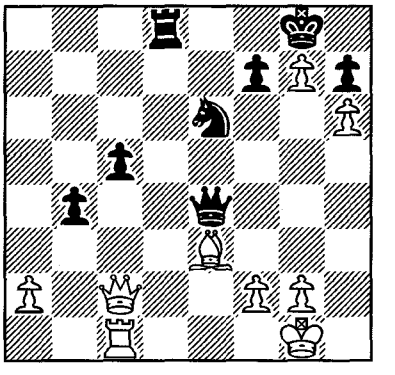
29 ♕c6! b4

Within three moves the c4-square will be blockaded by White, but to avoid ...b5-b4 in favour of waiting tactics would be pointless. In this type of situation Black must seek chances in a nervy battle at the board, not in the analysis of an adjourned game. Objectively too, in the event of 29...♕d3 30 ♖c1 ♕e2 31 g3 ♕b2 32 ♔g2 Black's possibilities are exhausted, and after 32...♕xa2 33 ♗xc5 the finish is close.

30 ♕a4! ♕d3 31 ♖c1 ♕d5 32 ♕b3 ♕e4

The exchange of rooks – 32...♕h5 33 ♕c4 ♖d1+ 34 ♖xd1 ♕xd1+ would have led to an endgame that is easily won for White: 35 ♔h2 ♕h5+ 36 ♔g3 ♕g6+ 37 ♔f3 ♕f6+ (37...♕h5+ 38 g4 ♘g5+ 39 ♗xg5 ♕xg5 40 ♕a6 ♕d5+ 41 ♔g3 ♕e5+ 42 ♔h3 ♕e8 43 f3 – zugzwang follows) 38 ♔e2 ♕b2+ 39 ♔f1 ♕a1+ 40 ♗c1. There are no more checks, and with his immobile king Black cannot resist: 40...♕d4 41 ♕xd4 ♘xd4 42 ♗e3 ♘e6 43 g4 c4 44 ♔e2.

33 ♕c2

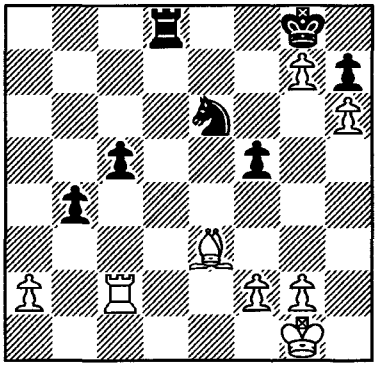


33...♕xc2?

In time-trouble Korchnoi exchanges his most active piece. White would have been set more problems by 33...♕g4!, and after 34 ♗xc5? ♖c8 35 ♕d2 the cavalry attack 35...♘f4! would completely confuse the situation: 36 f3 ♕g5 37 ♖c2 ♕xh6 38 ♕xb4 ♕g6.

34 f3 ♕g3 35 ♕e4 ♕d6 36 ♔f2 would have retained a decisive advantage, although in this position the opponent can still continue to resist. It is quite probable that in the event of 33...♕g4! the adjourning of the game would not have been a formality.

34 ♖xc2 f5



35 f4! ♔f7

It is curious that after 35...♖d5 White also wins (apart from by 36 ♔f2 or 36 ♖e2) by 36 g4 fxg4 37 ♖c4, intending ♖e4 and ♔g2-g3. Black's helplessness is absolute – such is the strength of the protected g7-pawn.

36 g4! ♖d5 37 gxf5 ♖xf5 38 ♖d2 ♖f6 39 ♖d7+ ♔g8 40 f5!

The h6-pawn must be retained. Although after 40 ♖e7?! ♖g6+ 41 ♔f2 ♖xh6 42 f5 ♖f6 43 ♖xe6 ♖xf5+ 44 ♔e2 ♔xg7 White is a bishop up, it does not control the queening square of the last white pawn. Thanks to the rooks being still on the board, White should win, but the game could have dragged out.

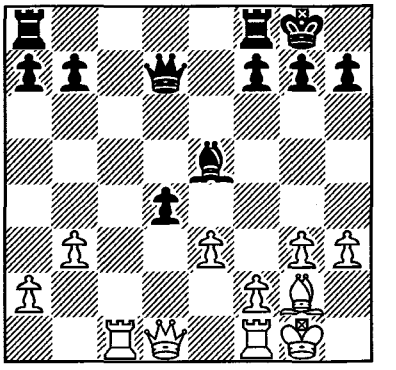
40...♖xf5 41 ♖e7

The remaining moves need not have been made, but Korchnoi did not want to hear the applause in honour of the winner.

41...♘xg7 42 ♖xg7+ ♔h8 43 ♖c7 ♔g8 44 ♗xc5 ♖g5+ 45 ♔f2 ♖g6 46 ♗e3

Black sealed the secret move **46...♖a6**, but the following day he resigned (**1-0**) without resuming.

The score became 5-2. Zaitsev: 'The fact that the end of the match was now close was eloquently indicated by the 15th game, in which, by a clever and unexpected bishop sacrifice, Korchnoi won a pawn in a position with heavy pieces and opposite-coloured bishops. But the way he chose to convert the advantage proved too simplifying, and did not pose Karpov any great problems.



20 ♖c5

'Even during the game it seemed to us that the immediate 20 exd4 was stronger, and if 20...♗xd4 – 21 ♖c5! After 21...♖ad8 22 ♖d5 ♕xd5 23 ♗xd5 ♖xd5 24 ♕f3 ♖fd8 25 ♖e1 it would have taken Black a further few dozen moves to demonstrate a draw.

20...♗f6 21 ♖d5?!

'White should probably not have hurried with this move: after 21 exd4 ♖d8 (21...♖ac8, recommended by Korchnoi in *Informator*, is no better) he could have tried to break up his opponent's defences by 22 ♖a5!? In the event of the straightforward 22...b6?! 23 ♖d5 White's chances are improved in view of the weakening of the c6-square. A tactical solution, easily found by a computer, is evidently better – 22...♕c7 23 ♖xa7 ♗xd4 24 ♖xb7 ♗xf2+ 25 ♔h1 ♕xg3 26 ♕f3 ♖d2 27 ♕xg3 ♗xg3, but here too after 28 a4 f6 29 a5 ♖f7 30 a6 White retains chances of success.

21...♕c7 22 exd4 ♖ad8, and Black gained a draw on move 41.

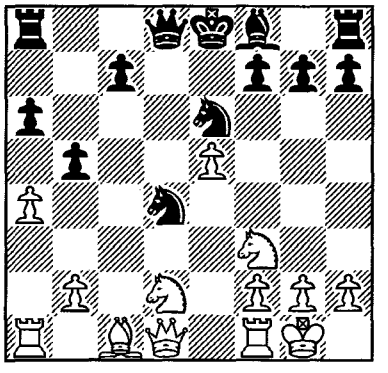
'It was felt that Korchnoi no longer had his former energy and persistence. One could cite

several modern examples, where with this balance of material the stronger side was able to create considerable difficulties for his opponent.'

The next two games also produced draws. Tal: 'I was not even very concerned about what score Karpov won by. The only thing, I thought, was that he should not repeat the mistakes of Baguio. He did not repeat them. It is true that at several points the match scores coincided, but at that the analogies with Baguio concluded. And when with the score standing at 5-2 he made three draws, I didn't worry, since not once was Karpov in serious danger of losing. And by the 18th game all the objective data, including my "inner voice", pointed to the fact that it was time for the match to end.'

Game 86
A.Karpov-V.Korchnoi
World Championship Match,
Merano 1981, 18th game
Ruy Lopez C80

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♘xe4 6 d4 b5 7 ♗b3 d5 8 dxe5 ♗e6 9 ♘bd2 ♘c5 10 c3 d4 11 ♗xe6 ♘xe6 12 cxd4 ♘cxd4 13 a4!



This suggestion was made by Polugayevsky. 'Here everything was much simpler: the author of the idea was in Merano and he himself was able to put it into an appropriate form.' (Zaitsev). A joint analysis showed that there were just as many dangerous pitfalls here for Black, as after 13 ♘e4 (*Game No.85*).

And despite the fact that the opponent had not yet solved all his opening problems after the knight move, it was decided to test his reaction to another novelty. The effect exceeded all expectations! Korchnoi thought for 54 minutes over his reply and did not choose the best plan of defence.

13...♗e7?!

Present-day practice has sifted out both 13...♗e7 and 13...♖b8. In the latter case the endgame arising after 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♘e4 ♗e7 16 ♗e3 ♘f5 17 ♗a7 ♕xd1 18 ♖fxd1 ♖d8 19 g4 ♖xd1+ 20 ♖xd1 is difficult for Black, for example: 20...♘h4 21 ♘xh4 ♗xh4 22 ♗e3 (Smirin-Hübner, Polanica Zdroj 1995), or 20...♘h6 21 h3 f5 22 exf6 gxf6 23 ♗e3 (C.Hansen-I.Sokolov, Malmö 1997).

For a time 13...♗c5 was considered best. After 14 ♘e4 ♗b6 White has a fair choice, but the most promising is probably 15 ♘fg5!? Good chances of equalising are given by 14...0-0 15 ♘xc5 ♘xf3+ 16 ♕xf3 ♘xc5 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♗g5. This position was considered clearly better for White, until Black resorted to the radical measure of sacrificing his queen – 18...♖xa1 19 ♗xd8 ♖xf1+ 20 ♔xf1 ♖xd8. This occurred, in particular, in the game Topalov-Anand (Dos Hermanas 1996), where after 21 g3 (not 21 ♕c6 ♘e6 22 ♕xb5?? ♖d1+ 23 ♔e2 ♘d4+) 21...♘e6 22 ♕b7 g6 23 ♕xb5 c5 24 h4 h5 Black set up a seemingly impregnable fortress. But later, in the 21st century, after 14 ♘e4 he only replied 14...♗b6. The question suggests itself: is the fortress really impregnable?

Nowadays 13...♗b4 has come to the forefront, although in the game Kramnik-Shirov (Monaco rapidplay 2005) Black quickly ended up in a difficult position: 14 axb5 ♘xf3+? 15 ♘xf3 axb5 16 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 17 ♘g5! Also, 14...axb5? 15 ♖xa8 ♕xa8 16 ♘xd4 ♘xd4 17 ♕g4 is bad for him. Therefore 14...♘xb5 is played, but after 15 ♘e4 0-0 16 ♗e3 (Shirov-

Anand, Mainz rapidplay 2004) or 15 ♕a4 ♗e7 16 ♘e4 (Svidler-I.Sokolov, Wijk aan Zee 2005) Black encounters certain difficulties.

It has to be said that modern practice does not offer an absolutely reliable prescription against 13 a4!

14 ♘xd4 ♘xd4

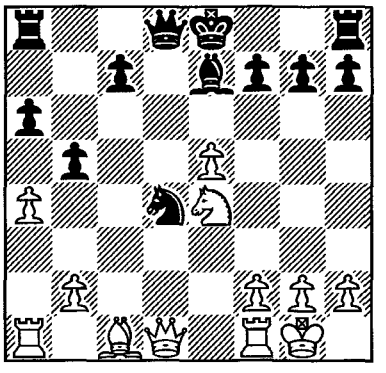
After making several attempts to defend the position after 14...♕xd4 15 axb5 ♕xe5 16 bxa6 0-0 17 ♕a4, Black has remained dissatisfied with the results:

1) 17...♖fb8 18 a7 ♖b7 19 ♘f3 ♕d5 (or 19...♕b5 20 ♕xb5 ♖xb5 21 ♗e3 ♗f6 22 ♖a2 Hjartarson-Smejkal, Bundesliga 1989) 20 ♗e3 ♗c5 21 ♖ad1 ♕b3 22 ♕xb3 ♖xb3 23 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 24 ♘d4 (Ehlvest-Marin, Tallinn 1989);

2) 17...♘c5 18 ♕c4 ♖fb8 19 ♖a5 ♕d6 20 ♘e4 ♘xe4 21 ♕xe4 ♕b4 22 ♕xb4 ♗xb4 23 ♖a4 ♖b6 24 a7 ♗c5 25 ♖d1 (Topalov-Korchnoi, Madrid 1996). It would appear that Korchnoi could have saved this endgame by playing 25...♖b7 (26 ♗e3 ♗xe3 27 fxe3 ♔f8), but also White's advantage could have become tangible in the event of 19 ♘f3! ♕e6 20 ♕xe6 fxe6 21 a7 ♖b7 22 ♘d4 or 22 ♗e3.

15 ♘e4

This thematic move 'secures White a solid advantage both with the queens on, and after their exchange.' (Karpov)



15...♘e6?

The knight cannot be maintained in the centre. Korchnoi did not want to move it away from the kingside, but at e6 its position is insecure. 15...0-0 16 axb5 ♘xb5 17 ♗e3 ♕c8 was nevertheless better – the knight, protected by the a6-pawn, would itself defend the other pawn island, and the queen, after moving to e6 or f5, would hinder the development of White's attack.

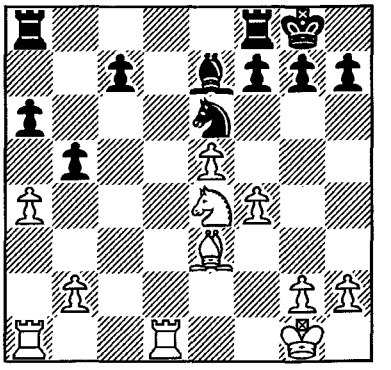
At one time such a set-up was practised by Yusupov, who is famed for his tenacity in defence. He had problems in three games from 1989 – with Ivanchuk (Linares), Adams and Chandler (both Hastings), and did not find any followers. In the variation 13...♗b4 14 axb5 ♘xb5 (cf. above) positions with a similar pattern arise, but with the knights on f3 and e6 – there it is easier for Black to defend.

16 ♗e3 0-0 17 f4 ♕xd1

If 17...g6 Karpov was ready to play 18 g4!, ensuring the advance f4-f5.

18 ♖fxd1

As a result of his badly played opening, Black has ended up in a difficult position without a hint of counterplay.



18...♖fb8?!

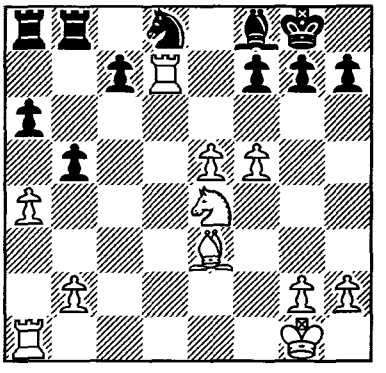
Black's hopes of activating his rooks are not destined to be realised, whereas the appearance of a white rook on the 7th rank makes a catastrophe inevitable. The 'resolute' 18...f5 19 exf6 ♗xf6 (or 19...gxf6 20 f5 ♘g7 21 g4) 20 ♘xf6+ (20 f5 ♗xb2 21 fxe6 ♗xa1 22 ♖xa1 followed by ♘c5 is perhaps even stronger) 20...gxf6 21 f5 ♘g7 22 g4 looks very unattractive. The best chance was to simplify by 18...♖fd8 19 axb5 axb5 20 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 21

f5 ♖d8 (21...♘f8 22 ♖c1! ♖a4? 23 ♘c3) 22 ♖xd8+ (22 ♖c1 ♘d4) 22...♘xd8. Despite White's obvious superiority, Black could have hoped to save the game, thanks to the limited material remaining.

19 ♖d7 ♗f8

'19...♗d8 was more tenacious, although even in this case after 20 a5 ♘f8 21 ♖d3 Black's position is far from pleasant.' (Karpov). Indeed, despite the material equality, the disharmony in the placing of Black's pieces and his bad pawn structure make his position objectively lost.

20 f5 ♘d8



21 a5!

The pawn capture 21 ♖xc7 (which is what, evidently, Korchnoi was hoping for) would have allowed the rook to become active: 21...bxa4 22 ♗d4 ♖b4 23 ♖d1 (Keene) 23...♖b7 (pointed out by Karpov) 24 ♖xb7 ♘xb7 25 ♖a1 a3 26 bxa3 ♖d8. By postponing the winning of material, with consistent play the world champion denies his opponent the slightest chance.

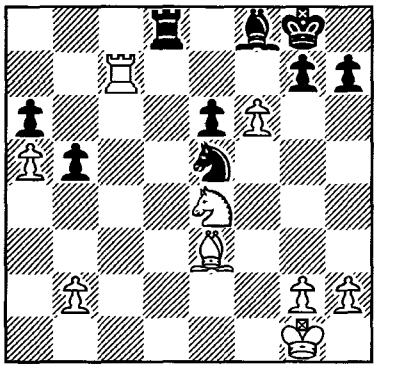
21...♘c6 22 e6! fxe6 23 f6!

Powerful play. 'It would seem that Korchnoi underestimated this move when he played 19...♗f8.' (Karpov). I think that Korchnoi underestimated the whole series of White's last few moves, when he placed his rook on b8.

23...♘e5

It is possible to lure the rook off the 7th rank, but at too high a price: 23...♖d8 24 ♖xc7 ♖ac8 25 f7+ ♔h8 26 ♖xc8 ♖xc8 27 ♖c1 (Karpov) 27...♘e7 28 ♖xc8 ♘xc8 29 ♘c5, and a piece has to be given up for the f7-pawn. It is also unbearable to endure the rook there: 23...♖c8 24 ♖c1! ♘xa5 25 ♗d4 ♖d8 26 ♖cxc7 ♖xd7 27 ♖xd7 ♘c6 28 fxg7 ♗e7 29 ♖c7! ♖d8 30 ♗e3.

24 ♖xc7 ♖c8 25 ♖ac1 ♖xc7 26 ♖xc7 ♖d8



27 h3!

'There is no reason to hurry. This move secures a quiet refuge for the king.' (Karpov). I relate differently to chess time in general and to prophylaxis in particular. This is evidently why our chess styles are so dissimilar.

27...h6

This is not prophylaxis in return – Black simply has no useful moves. He also loses after 27...♖d7 28 ♖c8 ♖d1+ 29 ♔f2 gxf6 30 ♘xf6+ ♔g7 31 ♘xh7 or 31 ♔e2.

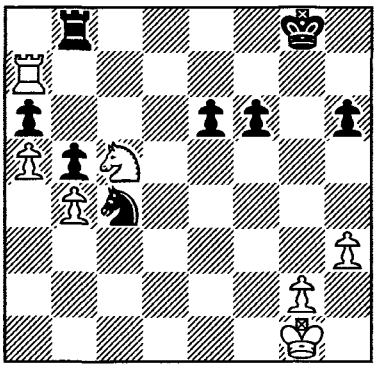
28 ♖a7! (undoubtedly the clearest way of converting the advantage) **28...♘c4**

Neither now, nor later, can the rook leave the 8th rank, on account of major losses: 28...♖d1+ 29 ♔f2 ♖b1 30 ♗d4 ♘c6 31 f7+ ♔h7 32 ♖a8 ♘xd4 33 ♖xf8 ♖xb2+ 34 ♔g1 ♖b1+ 35 ♔h2 ♖f1 36 ♖d8.

29 ♗b6! ♖b8 30 ♗c5 ♗xc5+ 31 ♘xc5 gxf6 32 b4!

A technically accurate decision. For an instant Black is a pawn up, but his position is still absolutely hopeless. This was the right

time to resign, but Korchnoi, as in the last game in Baguio, wanted to hold out until the adjournment. The remainder is clear without any commentary.



32...♖d8 33 ♖xa6 ♔f7 34 ♖a7+ ♔g6 35 ♖d7! ♖e8 36 a6 ♖a8 37 ♖b7 ♔f5 38 ♖xb5 ♔e5 39 ♖b7 ♔d5 40 ♖f7! f5 41 ♖f6

Korchnoi sealed **41...e5**, after which White has a whole range of winning moves: 42 ♘d7, 42 ♘a4, 42 ♖xf5... But, as was expected, there was no adjournment session. Two hours before it was due to begin, Black resigned (**1-0**), and the match concluded with the score 6-2 (plus 10 draws) in Karpov's favour.

Baturinsky remembers that Korchnoi first sent Klein a hand-written note in English: 'I inform you that I am resigning the 18th game and the entire match, and I congratulate Karpov and the entire Soviet delegation on their excellent electronic technology. Korchnoi.' As is evident, the challenger sincerely believed that the cause of his defeat was the effect of mysterious electronic rays. However, when a few hours later Baturinsky asked Klein to make a photocopy of this note, the latter laughingly replied: 'It doesn't exist!'

Here is a present-day summary by Zaitsev: 'It appears that it was these concluding salvoes, fired at the Open Variation, which brought Karpov victory in the match. Formally that is so, but in my opinion the main reason for Korchnoi's defeat was that he was excessively carried away by set-ups where the strategic situation in the centre was determined too early. As a very strong strategist, he should possibly have directed all his efforts towards seeking (or, in the end, discovering) set-ups where for quite a long time a strategic (not positional, but strategic!) struggle would have been maintained. That is, a struggle for control over the processes of structure formation. A prompt for Korchnoi could have been provided, at the least, by two of his old wins over Karpov – in Hastings (1971/72) and in the 19th game of their Moscow match (1974), where a compact queen's pawn opening was played. Later such a course was quite deliberately and not unsuccessfully chosen against Karpov by other match opponents – Yusupov (1989) and Anand (1998).'

The opinions of well-known grandmasters, expressed immediately after the match, are also interesting in their own way.

Polugayevsky: 'I sensed the mood of the world champion – not only to win the match, but to gain a convincing victory. He approached the event professionally, in the best sense of the word.'

Geller: 'The fifth hour of play, which is especially difficult for players, was completely Karpov's. He managed practically without any time-troubles and, above all, he did not permit himself the premature inner demobilisation, which more than once let him down in Baguio. The world champion also won the theoretical duel. His practical and analytical work proved very accurately balanced.'

Gligoric: 'The quality of play in Merano was much higher – far fewer mistakes, than in many other similar matches. Karpov played excellently, and he now has no equals, therefore there is no point in judging his opponent's play too severely. The match provided some exceptionally important conclusions for opening theory.'

Schmid: 'Karpov is an outstanding phenomenon. But apart from his exceptional tal-

ent, which showed itself at an early age, he also needed excellent conditions in which it could develop. The present world champion is a universal player of the highest class.'

Olafsson: 'A convincing win! We face three years for selecting Karpov's future opponent, and at the moment it is not easy to say who will compete with him. Among the most probable contenders I would name Timman, Kasparov, Korchnoi, and also Beliavsky and Balashov. One thing is certain: today Karpov is the strongest player in the world.'

Larsen: 'I predicted the 6-2 score a long time ago, and I was wrong only about the total number of games; I thought there would be 22. In all the post-war period there has been no other world championship match where the champion was so superior to the challenger. I think that the next contender for the crown will be Timman, or Beliavsky, or... Larsen. Kasparov? When he sacrifices, he is always sure that he will win – he is too great an optimist!'

Najdorf: 'I have to apologise to Karpov. Up till now I regarded him as an accurate chess worker. In Merano he showed himself to be a genius. That which he does can be compared with the play of Capablanca in the period of his greatest fame. I would place Anatoly among the best players in history.'

Nine years later, after cooling down somewhat, even Korchnoi admitted in an interview that Karpov was a real world champion and that he had occupied a worthy place in chess history...

Who's next?

On the results of 1981, journalists awarded Karpov another – already the eighth! – chess 'Oscar', with his contemporary and long-standing rival Jan Timman in second place. And the Dutch grandmaster promptly confirmed his strength, by brilliantly winning a strong tournament in Mar del Plata (February 1982): 1. Timman – 9½ out of 13; 2. Portisch – 8; 3-5. Karpov, Polugayevsky and Seirawan – 7½; 6. Andersson – 7, etc.

Starting from the 3rd round, Timman scored eight successive wins(!), including one over Karpov – again with Black in a Sicilian Defence (cf. *Game No.89*, note to White's 9th move). After such a spurt there was no question about the winner of the tournament. But what about the world champion?

Polugayevsky: 'The chess world is already accustomed to Karpov finishing only first. But it cannot be forgotten that little more than two months has passed since the match in Merano. All that time the champion has been literally "bombarded" – he has had numerous meetings with chess fans, and he has been unable to rest properly. This told on his play: in a number of games he clearly failed to gain points that had already been earned, and after being close to a win against Palermo he even lost... Although he still felt tired after the match for the crown, the world champion, in contrast to the overwhelming majority of his predecessors, nevertheless did not deviate from his principle: to participate in strong tournaments planned beforehand.'

There was indeed much to divert Karpov: with the blessing of the highest Party officials, he was 'elected' chairman of the Soviet Peace Fund (to the present day he is still the head of this transformed organisation). And at that time, as editor-in-chief of *64*, the champion conducted a correspondence press conference for readers of the magazine, replying to their numerous questions. My attention was drawn to two of his statements.

About his chess credo: 'I have heard many times how Botvinnik divides chess players into "researchers" and... those who include me. I will not argue with the esteemed Mikhail Moiseevich – after all, it is not a question of the name – but I firmly believe that my "non-researching activity" is not only liked by the chess world, but also benefits it. Incidentally, the greatest number of valuable chess inventions by Botvinnik relate to that time when he was playing intensively in competitions. And it is hard to count the losses suffered by chess,

during the years of the voluntary "sabbatical" of a grandmaster at the height of his powers.'

About his future opponent and the prospects of the young – Kasparov, Psakhis, Yusupov and Dolmatov: 'If we add to them the best of those in their thirties, we obtain the names of those who will contest the Candidates matches in the immediate future. And perhaps also participate in a match for the title of world champion... It is not yet clear whether Korchnoi will be able to recover after his crushing defeat in Merano, but for the moment he is the No.2 player in the world. True, I know a grandmaster who is capable of beating him. I think that if he qualifies for the Candidates matches and meets Korchnoi, he will win. That player is Timman.'

Karpov found it difficult at the tournament in London (April 1982). At the start he missed winning chances in his game with Short, then he made three more draws and only in the 5th round did he gain his first win – over Mestel. Karpov: 'As the local press wrote, in this game the "Dragon" was overcome with the aid of technique. Continuing the play on words, I would have added that this is quite natural: after all, you can't take it with your bare hands.'

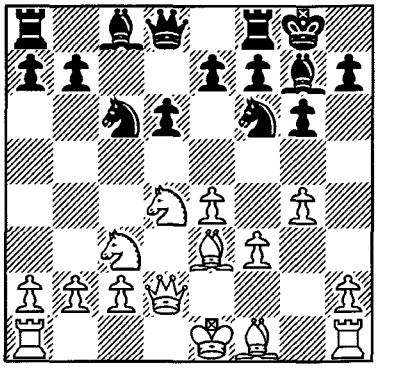
There then followed three more draws, including one with Timman. Playing White, Karpov was eager to gain revenge for Mar del Plata and this time he gained an obvious advantage in a Sicilian Defence. But after a number of inaccuracies he had, on the contrary, to try and save the game: at the tournament there were evening adjournment sessions, and the game went on for three successive days! But generally speaking, Timman played unevenly in London – as Karpov said, 'the uneven nature of this talented grandmaster's performances is surprising, although it is already becoming almost customary.'

In the 9th round the champion finally gained a second win – again in a 'Dragon', and over an expert on it, Tony Miles. Even in this variation Karpov sought ways that would enable him to escape from sharp lines and critical theoretical debates into simple technical positions, where what acquired decisive importance was his superiority in positional understanding and his ability to arrange his pieces 'properly'. This game is one of a series of his 'Sicilian pianissimos'.

Game 87
A.Karpov-A.Miles
London 1982, 9th round
Sicilian Defence B76

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 g6 6 ♗e3 ♗g7 7 f3 0-0 8 ♕d2 ♘c6 9 g4

Karpov's choice can be explained by the fact that in the sharp variations of the Dragon – 9 0-0-0 d5 or 9 ♗c4 ♗d7 10 0-0-0 ♖c8 11 ♗b3 ♘e5 12 h4 (*Game No.67*) 12...h5 – Miles felt very comfortable.

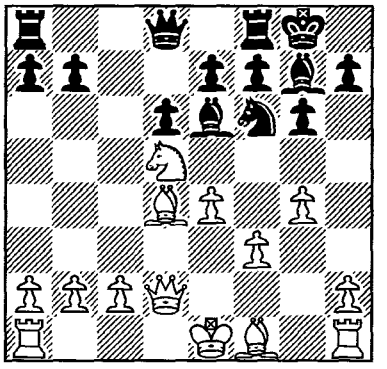


9...♗e6!

This is deemed best, since it enables Black quite easily to create counterplay. However, occasionally he has also gone in for the semi-correct sacrifice 9...♗xg4?! 10 fxg4 ♘xg4 or for the voluntary creation of an isolated pawn in the centre: 9...e6 10 0-0-0 (after 10 ♘db5?! Black seizes the initiative: 10...d5 11 ♗c5 a6!? 12 ♗xf8 ♔xf8 13 exd5 exd5 14 ♘a3 b5 Kochiev-Miles, Manila 1974) 10...d5 11 g5 ♘h5 12 h4 (12 f4!?; 12 ♖g1!?) 12...♘g3 13 ♖g1 ♘xf1 14 ♖gxf1 ♘e5 15 b3 ♕a5 16 ♔b1 ♖d8

17 exd5 exd5 (Dolmatov-Tseshkovsky, Frunze 1983).

In order to understand Miles's decision to play 9...♗e6, let us look at the 5th round game Karpov-Mestel: 9...♘xd4 10 ♗xd4 ♗e6 (in passing, here is a great rarity – Botvinnik plays the Rauzer Attack: 10...♕a5 11 h4 ♗e6 12 h5 ♖fd8? 13 hxg6 hxg6 14 a3 d5 15 e5 ♘d7 16 ♕h2 ♘f8 17 ♗d3 with an enormous advantage, Botvinnik-Averbakh, Moscow 1955), and here the champion, who already had experience in this position (11 0-0-0 ♕a5 12 ♔b1 ♖fc8 13 a3 ♖ab8 – 13...♗c4!? – 14 g5 ♘h5 15 ♘d5 ♕xd2 16 ♖xd2 ♗xd5 17 exd5 Karpov-Dueball, Skopje Olympiad 1972), devised 11 ♘d5!? at the board, with the obvious aim of preventing the appearance of the queen at a5.



Analysis diagram

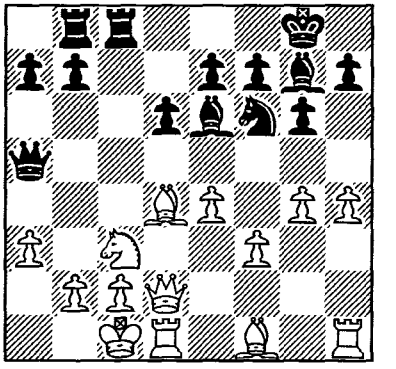
After 11...♗xd5 12 exd5 ♕c7 (12...♕d7!? 13 ♗c4 ♖fc8 14 ♗b3 a5!, and Black's counterattack looks no weaker than White's attack) 13 h4 ♖ac8 14 ♖h2 e5 15 dxe6 fxe6 a double-edged situation arose, in which Karpov, exploiting his opponent's inaccurate play, fairly quickly transposed into a favourable endgame. Apparently Miles wanted to deny White the possibility of 11 ♘d5.

10 0-0-0 ♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 ♕a5 12 a3!

'It is better to make this move immediately, without ♔b1.' (Karpov)

12...♖ab8 13 h4 ♖fc8

13...b5! (not losing a tempo) is correct, when the invasion of the knight at d5 promises even less than in the game: 14 ♘d5 ♕xd2+ 15 ♖xd2 ♗xd5 16 exd5 a5 17 ♗e2 ♘d7 18 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 19 ♖e1 ♖fc8 20 ♗f1 ♘c5 (Dolmatov-Alterman, Jelenite 1995), or 14 g5 ♘h5 15 ♘d5 ♕xd2+ 16 ♖xd2 ♗xd5 17 exd5 ♘g3 18 ♖g1 ♗xd4 19 ♖xd4 ♘xf1 20 ♖xf1, in each case with equality.



14 ♘d5

Not wishing to engage in attacks on opposite wings, the outcome of which is hard to predict, Karpov again employs his favourite method, creating a pawn outpost at d5, which guarantees him a spatial advantage in a quieter situation: 'The direct attack on the king is not always successful, and therefore I decided to be satisfied with a slight advantage in the forthcoming endgame.' Here it would probably be more correct to talk about a slight initiative.

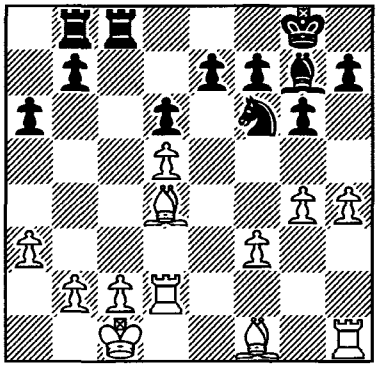
Even so, later experience showed that the opening of the h-file – 14 h5! b5 15 hxg6 followed by 15...hxg6 16 ♕g5!, 15...fxg6 16 g5!, or 15...b4 16 ♘d5! sets Black significantly more difficult problems.

14...♕xd2+ 15 ♖xd2 ♗xd5

Later the capture with the knight would be deemed safer: 15...♘xd5 16 exd5 (if 16 ♗xg7, then 16...♘e3 equalises) 16...♗xd5! 17 ♗xg7 ♗xf3 18 ♖h3 ♗xg4 19 ♖g3 ♔xg7 20 ♖xg4 (Dolmatov-Shirov, Klaipeda 1988). This endgame, where Black has three pawns for a bishop, is hard to evaluate. Dvoretsky, who

has made a detailed analysis of it, considers the two sides' chances to be roughly equal, only instead of 20...f5 he recommends sticking to waiting tactics – for example, 20...♖c7. It is hard for White to exploit the superiority of the bishop in an open position, if Black's pawn structure is not weakened.

16 exd5 a6



17 ♗e2

White has chances of gaining an advantage, thanks to the two bishops and the possibility of combining play on the kingside with a further bind.

17...♘d7

Hoping, if White wants to retain the bishop by 18 ♗e3, to create counterplay after 18...♘e5 19 h5 b5 20 b3 ♘d7. However, for the moment Karpov does not intend to avoid the bishop exchange, not wishing to concede the long diagonal.

18 f4 ♘c5 19 ♖h3 ♖c7

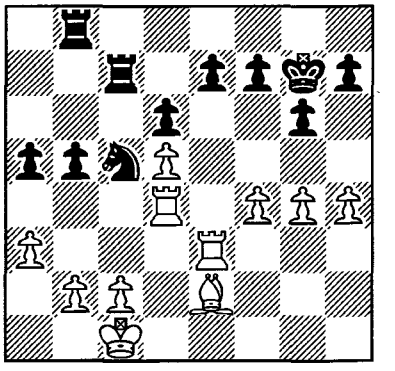
After 19...♗xd4 20 ♖xd4 the advance 20...e5?! is ineffective because of 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 ♖d1 (Karpov), but 20...b5 21 ♖e3 ♖c7 22 ♔d2 ♘a4 23 b3 ♘b6 leads to a roughly equal position, which Miles could have obtained later.

20 ♖e3 b5 21 ♗xg7

White has no right to allow the activation of the black rooks after ...b5-b4, and Karpov makes a prophylactic regrouping, waiting to see what his opponent will do.

21...♔xg7 22 ♖d4! a5

Knowing the dynamic style of his opponent, the champion was expecting activity of this sort. Had Miles played 22...♘a4! 23 c3 ♘b6 (Karpov), trying to restrict the activity of the enemy pieces by the need to defend the d5-pawn, it would have been unclear how White could claim any advantage.



23 b4!

Immediately emphasising the weakening of the b5-pawn. Polugayevsky: 'If you study the play of Karpov and Fischer in the technical stage of the game, you can see that both of them, when playing White, had a liking for the light-squared bishop. Strangely enough, I consider the person to blame for Karpov growing fond of the light-squared bishop to be myself! In the 4th game of our match, I had a very powerful knight against a useless bishop in an ending, but I contrived to lose this ill-fated game.' (*Game No.54*).

23...♘a4

Some commentators considered this to be the decisive mistake, but in fact it does not spoil anything, although it was simpler to play 23...axb4 24 ♖xb4 (Karpov: 'with advantage to White') 24...♖cb7: the weakness of the b5-pawn is balanced by the weakness of the d5-pawn, and White's slight spatial advantage is neutralised by the impregnable position of the knight at c5.

24 bxa5! ♘c3 25 ♗f1 ♔f8

It was thought that after 25...♖a8 the bold raid of the king was very strong – 26 ♔b2 ♘a4+ 27 ♔b3 ♘c5+ 28 ♔b4 (Karpov). How-

ever, there are still quite a number of pieces on the board, and such a raid involves considerable risk. After 28...♘a6+ 29 ♔xb5 ♖b7+ the further advance of the king deep into the enemy camp is fraught with problems: 30 ♔c6? ♘c5! 31 ♖xe7 (otherwise mate) 31...♖xe7 32 ♔xd6 ♖e4! (stronger than 32...♖e1 33 ♔xc5 ♖xf1 34 d6). And in the event of the inglorious retreat – 30 ♔c4 ♘c5 – Black has no reason for complaint.

26 ♖dd3!? (instead of 26 ♔b2) is more enterprising, but after 26...♘a4 (26...b4 27 a6! ♖c4 28 ♖f3) 27 ♖b3 ♖ac8 28 ♗d3 ♘c5 29 ♖xb5 ♘xd3+ 30 ♖xd3 ♖xc2+ 31 ♔b1 ♖h2 the consequences of the battle in this complicated endgame are not altogether clear.

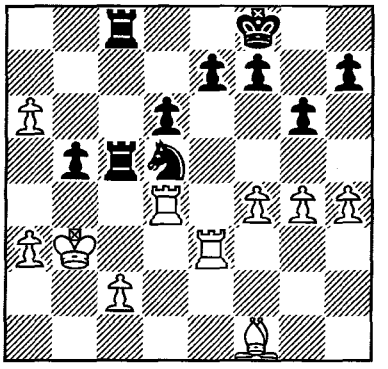
26 ♔b2 ♖bc8?

But this really is the decisive mistake! After 26...♘a4+! 27 ♔b3 ♘c5+ 28 ♔a2 ♘b7! (not 28...♘a4 29 ♖d2 Karpov) the outcome would have remained hard to predict: 29 a6 (29 ♗b5 ♖xc2+ 30 ♔b1 ♖g2) 29...♖xc2+ 30 ♔b1 ♖f2 31 ♗xb5 ♘c5 32 ♖b4 ♖a8 33 ♖e2 ♖f3, or 29 c3 ♘xa5 30 ♖b4 ♖c5 31 a4 ♖a8! 32 ♗xb5 (32 ♖xb5 ♘c4!) 32...♖xd5.

27 ♔b3 ♖c5

Miles had probably aimed for this position, already thinking about seizing the initiative. It is probable that he only briefly glanced at the exchange sacrifice, overlooking the final insidious move of White's tactical manoeuvre.

28 a6! ♘xd5



Otherwise simply a6-a7 and ♗h3.

29 ♖xd5! ♖xd5 30 ♖c3!

Splendid! 'A series of fantastic moves!' (Polugayevsky). Now an exchange of rooks is inevitable, and then the a-pawn, which had been left unnoticed, unexpectedly becomes a queen.

30...♖d8

After 30...♖xc3+ 31 ♔xc3 ♖c5+ 32 ♔b4 ♖c7 the simplest is 33 ♗g2! (Karpov). 'This is where the power of the bishop displays itself in all its glory!' (Polugayevsky)

31 ♖c7!

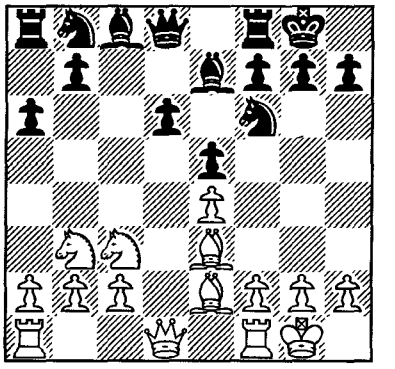
There was also a simple win by 31 a7 b4 32 axb4 ♖d1 33 ♗a6 ♖a1 34 b5 ♖a8 35 ♖c7 etc.

31...♖d1 32 ♗xb5 e5 33 a7 exf4 34 ♖b7 ♖b1+ 35 ♔a4 ♖xb5 36 ♖xb5 f3 37 ♖b8 f2 38 ♖xd8+ 1-0

In the 10th round Karpov continued his 'Sicilian series' with a win over Nunn – and he caught up with the long-time leader Portisch. But then came an 'unparalleled shuffle of the leaders'. The champion lost to the young American, Seirawan (incidentally, one of Korchnoi's seconds), but he retained his composure and in the penultimate round he won 'to order' against Portisch.

In this important encounter there occurred another variety of the 'Sicilian pianissimo' as performed by Karpov – his favourite line against the Najdorf Variation:

1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 a6 6 ♗e2 e5 7 ♘b3 ♗e7 8 0-0 0-0 (8...♗e6 – *Game Nos.54, 56 and 57*) **9 ♗e3**



9...♗e6!

The game Karpov-Georgadze (Moscow 1983) went 9...♕c7, and instead of 10 a4 ♗e6 11 a5 ♘bd7 12 ♘d5 (*Volume 2, Game No.98*) White chose 10 ♕d2 (also Geller's move) 10...♖e8!? (earlier 10...b5 11 ♘d5! or 10...♘bd7!? 11 a4 b6 12 ♖fd1 ♗b7 had been played) 11 a4 b6 12 ♗f3 ♗e6 13 ♘c1! (with the idea of ♘a2-b4-d5) 13...♘c6! 14 ♘d5! ♗xd5 15 exd5 ♘a5?! (15...e4!? Karpov) 16 b3 ♖ec8 17 ♖a2 ♘b7 18 ♖d1 ♘c5 19 ♕e1! (preventing ...♘e4) 19...♕b7 20 g3 ♕d7 21 ♗g2 h6? (21...♘g4! 22 ♗xc5 bxc5! was correct, and if 22 ♗d2, then 22...f5 or 22...b5) 22 a5! b5 23 ♗xc5! ♖xc5 24 ♘d3! ♖cc8?! (24...♖c7 25 ♘b4 ♕f5 was more tenacious) 25 ♘b4 ♖e8 26 ♘c6 ♗f8 27 ♕e2 e4?! 28 c4! bxc4 29 ♕xc4 ♕f5?! 30 ♖e2 h5 31 ♖de1! ♕xd5 32 ♕xd5 ♘xd5 33 ♗xe4 ♘c7 34 ♘e7+! ♖xe7 35 ♗xa8 ♖xe2 36 ♖xe2 ♘xa8 37 ♖c2! 1-0.

Here too Karpov's playing manner is clearly seen: the prophylactic restriction of the opponent's counterplay (16 b3, 19 ♕e1, 22 a5), the sudden transformation of one form of advantage into another (23 ♗xc5!) and the lightning transference of the knight to c6. All this was performed at the highest level!

10 ♕d2 (if 10 a4, then 10...♘c6 is good, or else 10...♘bd7 11 a5 ♖c8! 12 f3 ♕c7! 13 ♕d2 ♖fd8 14 ♖fd1 d5! with equality, Geller-Ivkov, Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970; Stein-Bronstein, Tallinn 1971) **10...♘bd7 11 a4 ♖c8**

11...♘b6 is also not bad: 12 a5 ♘c4 13 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 14 ♖fd1 h6 15 ♘c1 ♖c8 16 ♘d3 ♗e6 17 ♗b6 ♕e8 18 f3 ♘d7 19 ♗e3 f5 20 exf5 ♖xf5 21 ♘b4 ♕g6 22 ♘bd5 (Karpov-Quinteros, Lucerne Olympiad 1982) 22...♗d8! with equality.

12 a5

Following Geller. The play here is of a slow, 'creeping' nature, and the player who wins is the one who understands better the subtleties of the position: making a necessary exchange at the right time, correctly building a pawn chain, and so on. For Karpov's style this was an ideal variation!

12...♕c7

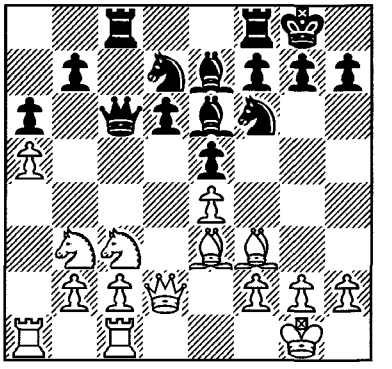
The waiting move 12...h6 is also possible (Penrose-Najdorf, Varna Olympiad 1962), or else the modern 12...♘c5 13 ♘xc5 dxc5 14 ♕xd8 ♖fxd8 15 f3 c4 (Hracek-Ponomariov, Bled Olympiad 2002; Leko-Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 2004).

13 ♖fc1

Preparing ♘d5. If 13 ♖fd1 ♘c5! 14 ♘xc5 dxc5, then 15 ♘d5 is now ineffective in view of 15...♗xd5 16 exd5 ♗d6 17 c4 e4 18 g3 ♖fe8. Or 15 ♗f3 ♖fd8 16 ♕e1 ♖xd1 17 ♕xd1 c4! 18 ♗b6 ♕d6 19 ♕e1 ♕b4 (Lautier-Gelfand, Tilburg 1996), in each case with equality.

13...♕c6 14 ♗f3

The critical moment: ♘d5 is unavoidable, and the outcome of the opening duel depends on how Black has prepared for it.



14...♗c4

Portisch follows the familiar path. It is also possible to play 14...♖fe8 15 ♘d5 ♗xd5 16 exd5 ♕c4 17 ♕d3 ♕h4 18 g3 ♕h3 with counterplay, or 14...h6 15 ♕d1 ♘h7 16 ♘d2 ♘g5! 17 ♘d5 ♘xf3+ 18 ♕xf3 ♗d8 19 c4 ♔h7 20 b4 f5 with equality (Leko-Bologan, Bled Olympiad 2002).

15 ♖a4!

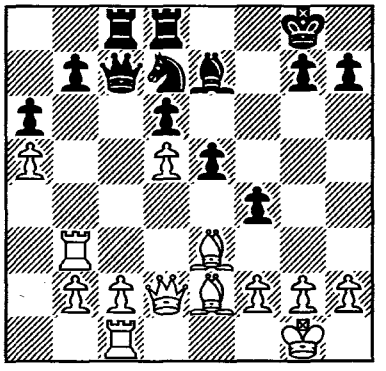
An improvement! In the game Mestel-Browne (Lone Pine 1978) after the insipid 15 ♕d1 ♖fd8 16 ♘d5 ♘xd5 17 exd5 ♕b5 Black obtained excellent play.

15...♖fd8 16 ♖b4! (depriving the queen of the b5-square, which strengthens the effect of the knight invasion) **16...♕c7 17 ♘d5 ♘xd5 18 exd5 f5 19 ♗e2 ♗xb3?!**

Portisch falters: 19...♗xe2 20 ♕xe2 ♗f6 was better.

20 ♖xb3 f4?

And this is a serious positional mistake 20...♗f6! was correct.



21 ♗b6! ♘xb6 22 ♖xb6 ♗g5 23 ♗g4 ♖b8 24 ♖e1! ♕c5 25 ♖e4! (now Black cannot even manage to exchange queens, and he is condemned to passive waiting) **25...♖f8 26 b4 ♕c7 27 c4 ♔h8 28 c5!**, and Black resigned on the 40th move (**1-0**).

The games with Portisch and Georgadze reflect not only Karpov's style, but also his playing philosophy, which is: to find the set-ups that are most unpleasant for the opponent, enabling him to gain a slight strategic initiative with an absence of real counterplay.

By also defeating Spassky in the last round (with Black in a Ruy Lopez), the world champion worthily concluded the London tournament: 1-2. Andersson and Karpov – 8½ out of 13; 3. Seirawan – 8; 4-7. Ljubojevic, Portisch, Speelman and Timman – 7; 8-9. Miles and Spassky – 6½; 10. Geller – 6, etc.

The next major event was the super-tournament in Bugojno (May 1982), where Karpov had already twice celebrated success, but on this occasion he was not among the contestants. On the other hand, I, the 19-year-old USSR Champion, already among the five strongest players in the world, managed to force my way there. I have already described the difficulties that this entailed in my book *Child of Change*. I will remind you of the main details.

Early in 1982 I received personal invitations from the organisers of three super-tournaments – in London, Bugojno and Turin. My trainer and I placed our choice on Bugojno. But when I spoke about this to Krogius (Baturinsky's direct successor), the head of the Sports Committee's chess administration, he suggested to me... a run-of-the-mill tournament in Dortmund, which was four categories lower! To my question as to what this all meant, he replied with disarming directness: 'We have a world champion, and we don't need another one.' And his boss Ivonin let slip in public: 'The Sports Committee is doing everything in its power to prevent Kasparov from meeting Karpov in this cycle.' What was I to do? Making use of a short visit to Baku by Ivonin and the President of the Soviet Chess Federation Sevastyanov, I appealed directly to them and to the Azerbaijan leader Geidar Aliev. And only then was I allowed to play in Bugojno.

The outcome of this event involving the leading grandmasters in the world evoked thoughts about the coming storms at the chess summit: 1. Kasparov – 9½ out of 13 (+6=7); 2-3. Ljubojevic and Polugayevsky – 8; 4-5. Hübner and Spassky – 7½; 6-8. Andersson, Larsen and Petrosian – 7; 9.Ivanovic – 6; 10. Timman – 5½, etc. 'Whereas earlier I thought that Kasparov could become Karpov's opponent no earlier than the next cycle, after Bugojno I am inclined to admit that this may possibly happen earlier,' Botvinnik said in an interview. That autumn I also won the Interzonal tournament in Moscow (+7=6), and at the Olympiad in Lucerne, substituting on board one for Karpov, I defeated Korchnoi in a very sharp struggle.

The champion too was not idle. In June he set off with his trainer Zaitsev to a strong double-round tournament in Turin. The participation of eight top-class grandmasters was planned, but at the last moment Timman withdrew, and after the first cycle, with a score of 'plus one', Hübner too pulled out (although, in the words of Zaitsev, 'he did not give anyone the impression of being seriously ill'). Karpov found it hard to get into his stride: he threw away an advantage against Andersson and unexpectedly lost to Ljubojevic... In turn, Portisch defeated Ljubojevic and joined the leading group.

In this situation the next duel between Karpov and Portisch was of exceptional importance. Apparently remembering about London, the Hungarian grandmaster avoided 1...c5 in favour of the Petroff Defence. Thus the two players began an unusual opening mini-match of three games, played over the course of six months in 1982. Here Karpov again made use of the stock of preparations remaining from his matches for the world crown, which ensured him an enormous advantage at the board for a long time, even against the leading theoreticians in the world.

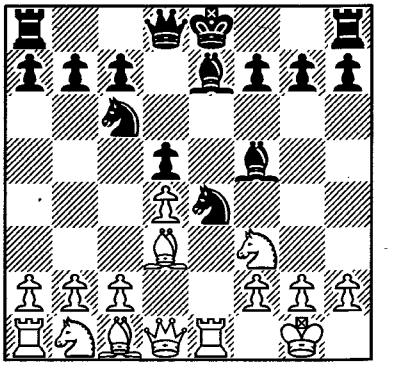
Game 88
A.Karpov-L.Portisch
Turin 1982, 6th round
Petroff Defence C42

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6 3 ♘xe5 (3 d4 – *Game No.104*) **3...d6 4 ♘f3 ♘xe4 5 d4 d5 6 ♗d3 ♗e7 7 0-0 ♘c6 8 ♖e1**

The modern move order – 8 c4! ♘b4 9 ♗e2 0-0 10 ♘c3 ♗f5 (or 10...♗e6) leads to a topical opening *tabiya*, which became especially popular at the turn of the century.

8...♗f5

In the end the traditional 8...♗g4 was nevertheless deemed more promising, despite the dismal outcome for Black of the game Karpov-Korchnoi (6th matchgame, Moscow 1974).



9 c4!

'A novelty, which Zaitsev and I had prepared for the match in Merano,' comments Karpov, 'but there in the 4th game I played 9 ♗b5, being under the influence of the game Timman-Portisch (Moscow 1981). 9 ♘bd2 is often played, for example: Kasparov-Karpov (Moscow 1981).'

I should add that the Kavalek-Karpov game from the previous round went 9 a3?! 0-0 10 c4 ♗f6 11 ♘c3 ♘xc3 12 bxc3 ♗xd3 13 ♕xd3 dxc4 14 ♕xc4 ♘a5 15 ♕a4 b6, and Black gained a draw without particular difficulty.

9...♘b4 10 ♗f1! (of course, not 10 cxd5? ♘xf2!) **10...0-0**

10...dxc4, as played in the second game of the 'Petroff series', is unsuccessful. After 11 ♘c3! ♘f6 (11...♘xc3? 12 bxc3 ♘c2 13 ♖e5 ♘xa1 14 ♖xf5 or 12...♘d3 13 ♗xd3 cxd3 14 ♗a3 is bad for Black) 12 ♗xc4! 0-0 13 a3 ♘c6 14 d5 ♘a5 15 ♗a2 c5 16 ♗g5 (16 ♘e5 ♗d6 17 ♕f3 is also strong) 16...♖e8 17 ♕a4 ♗d7 18 ♕c2 h6 19 ♗h4 ♘xd5 20 ♘xd5 ♗xh4 21 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 (Karpov-Portisch, Tilburg 1982) there could have followed 22 ♘xh4! ♕xh4 23 ♖e1, when Black's opening experiment ends in disaster.

11 a3 ♘c6 12 ♘c3

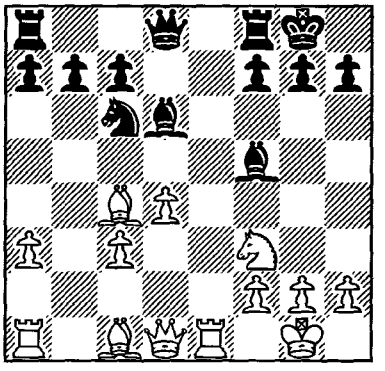
In his third game with Portisch (Lucerne Olympiad 1982) Karpov chose the superior continuation 12 cxd5! ♕xd5 13 ♘c3 ♘xc3 14 bxc3 ♗g6?! (allowing White to advance both

central pawns; 14...♗f6 was better) 15 c4 ♕d7 (after 15...♕d6 16 d5! it would now be bad to play 16...♗f6? 17 c5! ♕d7 18 dxc6 ♕xd1 19 ♖xd1 ♗xa1 20 cxb7 ♖ab8 21 ♗f4) 16 d5 ♗f6 17 ♖a2 ♘a5 18 ♗f4 (increasing the pressure; 18 ♘e5 was also not bad) 18...♖fe8 19 ♖ae2! ♖ec8? (this leads to a debacle, but it is already hard to offer Black any good advice) 20 ♘e5 ♕f5 21 ♗d2! ♘xc4 22 g4!, and White won.

12...♘xc3 13 bxc3 dxc4!

For the moment there is nothing for the bishop to do on the long diagonal: 13...♗f6 14 ♗f4 dxc4 15 ♗xc4 ♕d7 16 ♗a2 ♖fe8 17 ♕d2 b5 18 ♗g5 with unpleasant pressure (Adams-Karpov, Dortmund 1999). Portisch finds a good post for his dark-squared bishop.

14 ♗xc4 ♗d6!

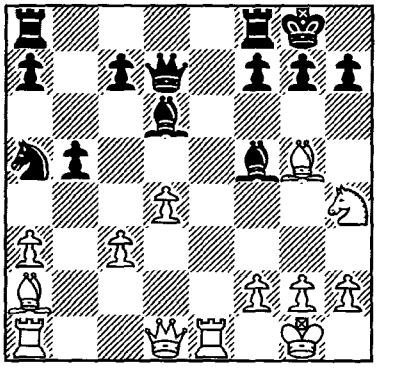


15 ♗g5

Nowadays it is considered that White retains the initiative by 15 ♖a2! ♕d7 16 ♘g5, for example: 16...♗g6 17 ♘e4 ♖fe8 18 ♖ae2 ♗xe4 19 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 20 ♖xe4 ♖e8 21 f3!? ♘d8 22 ♗b3 c6 23 a4 ♘e6 24 g3 (Adams-Anand, 3rd matchgame, New Delhi 2000), or 16...♘a5 17 ♗d3 b5 18 ♕f3 ♗g6 19 ♖ae2 (Shirov-Karpov, Prague blitz 2002).

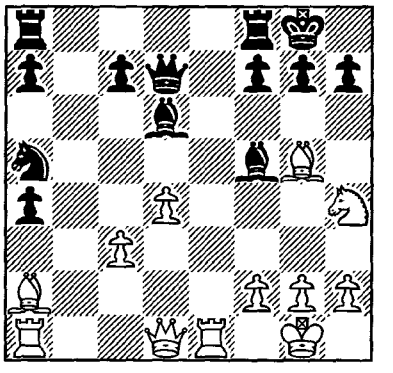
15...♕d7 16 ♘h4 (securing the advantage of the two bishops, but play in the centre came into consideration – 16 ♘e5) **16...♘a5 17 ♗a2 b5!?**

Black does not want to saddle himself with a weak pawn by 17...♗e6 18 ♗xe6 fxe6, although it is hard for White to transform his minimal advantage into anything real: 19 ♘f3 ♖ae8 20 ♗h4 ♕c6 21 ♕c2 h6 22 ♗g3 ♕d5 (Adams-Anand, 1st matchgame, New Delhi 2000). Another possibility is 17...♗g4!? 18 ♕d3 ♖ae8 19 h3 ♖xe1+ 20 ♖xe1 ♖e8 with equality (Svidler-Adams, 3rd matchgame, New Delhi 2000).



18 a4 a6?

The dynamics of the position are now clearly in White's favour, and Karpov exploits this very skilfully. Portisch was still hoping to establish his knight at c4 and therefore he avoided 18...bxa4!, which would have led to a radical change in the pawn structure. But in this way Black could have achieved an equal game!



Analysis diagram

Karpov was intending to play 19 ♗d5 ♖ae8 20 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 21 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 22 ♕xa4 ♖b8

23 ♖e1 'with the better chances', but 23...c6 leads to complete equality: 24 ♕xa5 cxd5 25 ♕xa7 ♖b1 26 ♕a8+ ♗f8 27 ♗d2 ♕e4 28 ♔f1 ♕d3+ 29 ♔g1 ♕e4. White also has no advantage after 19 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 20 ♗e7 ♖fe8 21 ♗b1 ♕d7 22 ♗xd6 ♘b3!

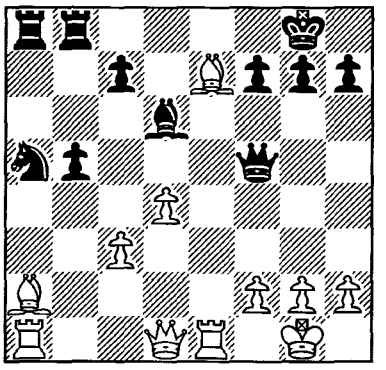
It remains to consider 19 c4 c5. After the direct 20 dxc5 ♗xc5 21 ♖e5? White can even lose: 21...♕xd1+ 22 ♖xd1 ♗g4! 23 ♖dd5 (or 23 ♖xc5 ♗xd1 24 ♖xa5 ♖fb8 25 ♗c1 ♗b3 26 ♗b1 ♖d8!) 23...f6! (Karpov) 24 ♖xc5 ♘b3 25 ♗xb3 axb3. In the position after 20 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 21 h4 ♘b3 22 ♗b1 ♕d7 23 dxc5 ♘xc5 24 ♖a2 Karpov sees 'excellent attacking chances', but the threat of 25 ♖d2 is easily parried by 24...♕c7! Incidentally, apart from 19...c5 Black can also play 19...♘b3!?, for example: 20 c5 (20 ♗xb3 axb3 21 ♕xb3 ♖fb8) 20...h6 21 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 22 ♗xb3 axb3 23 cxd6 ♕xg5 24 dxc7 b2 25 ♖b1 ♖ac8 26 ♖e5 ♕f6 27 ♕c2 ♕d6 28 ♖c5 ♖fe8 29 g3 ♖e7 with equality.

19 axb5 axb5 20 ♘xf5 ♕xf5 21 ♗e7 ♖fb8?!

It is hard to call this move a mistake, but it certainly aids the development of White's initiative. Other rook moves were also no better. After 21...♖fc8? 22 ♗b1 ♕d7 23 ♕f3! g6 24 ♗a2 Karpov judged this position to be won, but he is too categorical. The unexpected tactical operation 24...♘c4! 25 ♗xc4 ♕xe7! would have enabled Black to continue resisting: 26 ♗xf7+! ♔g7 27 ♗d5 ♖xa1 28 ♖xa1 etc.

Black's problems are not solved by 21...♖fe8 22 ♗xd6 cxd6 23 ♗b1 ♕d7 (23...♕h5? 24 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 25 g4! ♕h3 26 ♖xa5 ♕xc3 27 ♖xb5 ♖e1+ 28 ♔g2) 24 ♗e4! ♖a7 (24...d5? loses a pawn: 25 ♗xd5! ♕xd5 26 ♖xa5) 25 ♗f5 ♕c6 26 d5 ♖xe1+ 27 ♕xe1 ♕a8 28 ♗d3 g6 29 ♕e3 ♘c6 30 ♖xa7 ♘xa7 31 ♕d4, and it is hard for his knight to come into play.

The most tenacious was 21...♗xe7!? 22 ♖xe7 c6 (Karpov) 23 ♗b1! ♕f6 24 ♕e1 g6 25 ♗d3. Now Black loses by force after 25...♘c4? 26 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 27 ♗xc4 bxc4 28 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 29 ♕xe8+ ♔g7 30 ♕e5, but his defences hold after both 25...♘b3 26 ♖b1 ♖a3 and 25...♔g7 26 ♖b1 ♖ab8.



22 g4!

This sharp, but perfectly logical thrust (the queen must be dislodged from f5, where it defends the f7-pawn and prevents the white queen from going to f3) must have shocked the normally imperturbable Hungarian, and he immediately allows an unexpected tactical stroke.

22...♕d7?

It was essential to play 22...♕f4 23 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 (23...cxd6?! 24 ♗d5! ♖a7 25 ♖e4 ♕g5 26 ♕f3 is bad for Black) 24 ♕f3 ♕d7! (but not 24...♖f8 25 ♗xf7+ ♔h8 26 ♕g3! ♕xg3+ 27 hxg3 ♖xf7 28 ♖xa5 ♖af8 29 ♖xb5 ♖xf2 30 ♖f5 ♖2xf5 31 gxf5). After 25 ♗b1! c6 26 ♗e4 it is hard for Black to disentangle himself, since his knight is forced to remain at a5 to protect the c6-pawn, but it is still possible to defend.

23 ♗xf7+! ♔h8

The resistance would not have been prolonged for long by 23...♔xf7 24 ♖xa5! ♔g8 (mate follows after 24...♗xe7 25 ♕f3+ or 24...♖xa5 25 ♕b3+ ♔g6 26 ♖e6+) 25 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 26 ♕b3+ ♔h8 27 ♗xd6 cxd6. After 28 ♕e6 ♕c6 29 d5 ♕c8 30 g5 ♕d8 31 h4 Black cannot get at the white king, since his heavy pieces have to guard the 8th rank.

24 ♗xd6 ♕xf7 25 ♖e7 (conclusively de-

molishing Black's defences) **25...♕f8 26 ♗c5**

White prefers to intensify the pressure, not allowing the opponent any chances. There was another way to win – 26 ♗xc7 ♕xe7 27 ♗xb8 ♖xb8 28 ♖xa5 ♕c7 29 ♖a3 ♖f8 30 ♖b3, and Black's hopes of counterplay are illusory: 30...♕c4 31 ♖b4 ♕d5 32 ♕e2 ♕c6 33 ♖xb5 ♕xc3 34 ♖f5 ♖g8 35 d5.

26...♕f4 27 ♕e2 h6 28 ♖e4 ♕f7 29 ♖e5 ♘c4 30 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 31 ♖f5 ♕g6 32 ♕e4! ♔h7 33 h3 ♖a1+ 34 ♔g2 ♖c1 35 ♗b4 ♘d6 36 ♗xd6 cxd6 37 ♕d3 d5 38 f3! 1-0

The pawn march h3-h4-h5 is unavoidable.

In the remaining games Karpov gained quite good revenge against Ljubojevic and made five draws, which sufficed for a share of first place: 1-2. Andersson and Karpov – 6 out of 11 (after deducting the plus against Hübner); 3-4. Ljubojevic and Portisch – 5½; 5. Spassky – 5, etc.

'If it is borne in mind that only six months have passed since the conclusion of the battle in Merano, which took so much strength and energy, the results achieved by the world champion in the last two tournaments should be considered good. That, at any event, is my point of view as a trainer,' Igor Zaitsev wrote in *64*.

In July in Las Palmas the first of three Interzonal tournaments was held, bringing success to Ribli and Smyslov, and failure to Petrosian, Timman, Larsen and Psakhis. In August in Toluca, victory was shared by Portisch and Torre, leaving behind Spassky, Polugayevsky, Seirawan, Yusupov and Balashov. In September in Moscow it was Beliavsky and I who distinguished ourselves, ahead of Tal, Andersson and Geller. Together with Korchnoi and Hübner, the finalists from the previous cycle, this made up the eight Candidates, who had to play a series of matches to determine the world champion's next opponent.

In the meantime the champion, finally rested, apparently, after the 'battles in Merano', convincingly won his fourth super-tournament in Tilburg (autumn 1982): 1. Karpov – 7½ out of 11; 2. Timman – 7; 3-4. Andersson and Sosonko – 6½; 5-6. Petrosian and Smyslov – 6, etc. It could have been even better, but after a splendid start – wins over Hübner (the score of their meetings became +5=8), Petrosian (for the first time in his life!) and the new Candidate Torre – he unexpectedly miscalculated and lost to Portisch from a practically winning position (cf. *Game No.88*, note to Black's 10th move).

'This strongly affected the final result, since I not only lost a point, but my mood, understandably, was spoiled,' Karpov related in *64*. 'As expected, one of my main rivals in the fight for first place was Jan Timman. He is a very distinctive player, who is engaged in constant searchings both in opening theory, and in the middlegame. A strong grandmaster, it cannot be denied. But in the years of qualifying events, strange things happen with him. He apparently cannot cope with the feeling of responsibility, with the stresses that accompany these events, and he is unable to control his nerves. Thus in the last cycle he again performed badly in the Interzonal tournament. There is something unjust about a player performing splendidly for three years, but being unable to prepare for one tournament (or unable to cope with the nervous stress), and being eliminated from the world championship for another three years. Perhaps there is a case for players who have won several major tournaments being given an additional right (or personal invitation) to participate in the Candidates matches?'

The impression is that at that time the world champion was dreaming of meeting Timman in a match, and he greatly regretted that this did not happen. His individual score against one of the best western grandmasters at that time was +7–3=13. Later the Dutchman, as though forgetting about the 'nervous

stress', played several times in the Candidates matches and twice got through to the final! By the start of the final Karpov-Timman match in 1990 the score had risen to +16–4=30. Moreover, the insatiable Karpov won both this match: 6½-2½ (+4=5) and their next one, for the FIDE world championship (1993): 12½-8½ (+6–2=13). There is no doubt that Euwe's highly talented successor could have been a real contender for the chess crown, had it not been for the solid wall of Soviet grandmasters headed by the two 'Kas'...

In November 1982 the Soviet cohort – Karpov, Kasparov, Polugayevsky and Beliavsky, reserves Tal and Yusupov – crushed everyone at the World Olympiad in Lucerne: 1. USSR – 42½ out of 56; 2. Czechoslovakia – 36; 3. USA – 35½, etc. Karpov: 'The objective was fulfilled surprisingly easily. It is extremely rare for all the players in a team to be simultaneously in good form. We were able to vary our line-up at will.' In the 14 rounds Karpov played eight games (+5=3) and I played eleven (+6=5).

At that same time, with Soviet support, the organiser of the match in Baguio, Florencio Campomanes, was elected President of FIDE. Before the result of the vote was announced, a highly symbolic episode occurred. In a tragic voice the chairman read out a note that had been handed to him: 'I regret to inform you of the death of President Brezhnev. I would ask you all to stand and observe a minute's silence in his memory.' Immediately after this, in deathly silence, Campomanes's victory was announced. It appeared that the chess world was mourning not Brezhnev's departure, but its own future...

The world champion's next appearance was the super-tournament in Linares (February 1983): 1. Spassky – 6½ out of 10; 2-3. Andersson and Karpov – 6 (+2=8); 4-6. Miles, Sax and Yusupov – 5½ (ahead of Geller, Hort, Timman, Seirawan and Larsen). Karpov played with great care and restraint, but on one occasion he made a brilliant combination – and won the prize for the best game in the tournament.

Game 89
A.Karpov-G.Sax
Linares 1983
Sicilian Defence B81

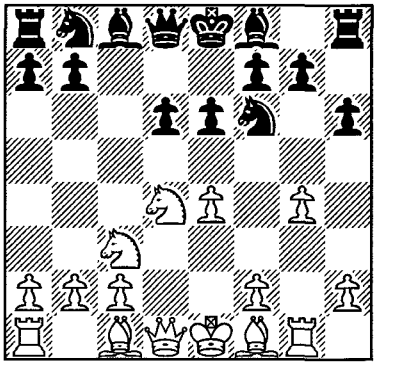
1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 g4

'My choice of variation was to some extent determined by the fact that in the first two rounds the Hungarian grandmaster had gained two wins, and in a short tournament this is an important factor. An attempt had to be made to stop him,' writes Karpov.

As is apparent from the above games with Hort, Dorfman and Spassky, when necessary Karpov would temporarily change his predominantly prophylactic style, although he tried to interpret even the sharp variations of the Keres Attack in a strictly positional manner.

6...h6 (6...♘c6 – *Game No.50*; 6...♗e7 – *Game No.71*) **7 ♖g1**

The champion's main move in the early 1980s (7 h4 – *Game No.83*).



7...♗e7

Not long before this Black successfully tried 7...♘c6 8 ♗e3 g5!? 9 ♕d2 ♘e5 (9...♘d7?! is questionable: 10 0-0-0 ♘de5 11 ♗e2 a6 12 h4 Anand-Sax, Reggio Emilia 1988) 10 ♗e2 ♘g6! 11 0-0-0 a6... ½-½ (Kar-

pov-Spassky, Turin 1982). On this occasion he might have faced 9 h4!? (Zaitsev-A.Sokolov, Moscow 1983).

But the game Karpov-Timman (Plovdiv 1983), played soon afterwards, went 8...a6 9 ♕e2 (9 h4!?) 9...♘xd4 10 ♗xd4 e5 11 ♗e3 ♗e6 12 h4, and after 12...g6!? 13 g5 hxg5 14 hxg5 ♘h5 15 0-0-0 ♘f4 16 ♗xf4 exf4 17 ♘d5 ♗g7 Black managed to extinguish his opponent's initiative.

8 ♗e3 (avoiding 8 h4 d5!? 9 exd5 ♘xd5 10 ♗b5+ ♔f8 with sharp play, Radulov-Sax, Vrsac 1975) **8...♘c6**

After this game Sax switched to 8...a6.

9 ♕e2

According to Karpov, the idea of this rather unusual move is that after 0-0-0 White wants to exploit the opposition of his rook and the black queen on the d-file. Earlier he tried 9 ♗e2, but after 9...a6 10 ♕d2 ♘xd4 11 ♕xd4 e5 12 ♕d2 ♗e6 13 ♗f3 ♘d7 14 ♘d5 ♗g5 15 0-0-0 ♖c8 16 ♔b1 ♗xd5 17 exd5 ♘c5 Black did not have any particular problems (Karpov-Timman, Mar del Plata 1982).

9...♗d7

A questionable novelty with the typical idea of ...♘xd4 and ...♗c6. The game Karpov-Andersson (Turin 1982) went 9...♘xd4 10 ♗xd4 e5 11 ♗e3 ♗e6 12 0-0-0 ♘d7!? 13 ♔b1 a6 14 f4 exf4 15 ♗xf4 ♗f6! 16 ♕e3 ♗e5 with a comfortable game for Black. Of course, an improvement had been prepared for the game with Sax. For example, 13 ♘b5!? ♘b6! (Zaitsev) 14 ♕d2, and Black still has to find an acceptable defence.

10 h4

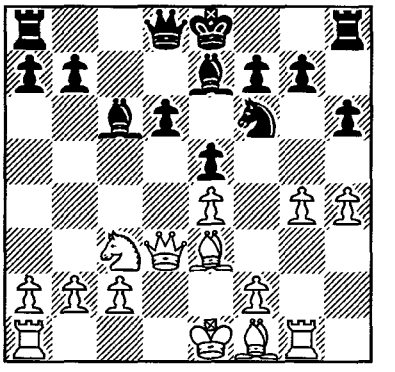
After 10 0-0-0 the consequences of the following variation seemed to Karpov to be unclear: 10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 e5 12 ♗e3 ♖c8 with the typical idea of ...♖xc3! 'Therefore in the first instance White sets in readiness the mechanism for driving the knight at f6 (g4-g5) from its important position.'

10...♘xd4 11 ♗xd4 e5 12 ♗e3 ♗c6 (if 12...♖c8, then 13 g5 hxg5 14 hxg5 ♘g4 15 ♖xg4 ♖xc3! 16 ♖g3! or, even better, 15 ♗d2!)

13 ♕d3

'Defending the e4-pawn and strengthening White's control of the d5-square. 14 g5 is threatened.' (Karpov)

In Dvoretsky's opinion, 13 ♕f3!? was stronger (but not 13 f3 ♘h7!), for example: 13...d5 14 ♘xd5! ♗xd5! (14...♘xd5 or 14...♘xe4 is bad because of 15 0-0-0!) 15 exd5 ♕xd5 16 ♗g2 with a slight advantage for White, or 13...♕a5 14 0-0-0 (14 ♗d2 ♕b4 is unclear) 14...♘xe4! 15 ♘xe4 ♕xa2 (15...d5?! 16 ♕f5! dxe4 17 ♗c4 ♖f8 18 ♕h7!?) 16 ♘c3 ♗xf3 (16...♕a1+ 17 ♔d2 ♕xb2 18 ♕g3! is dangerous for Black) 17 ♘xa2 ♗xd1 18 ♗b5+! ♔f8 19 ♖xd1 with somewhat the better ending for White.

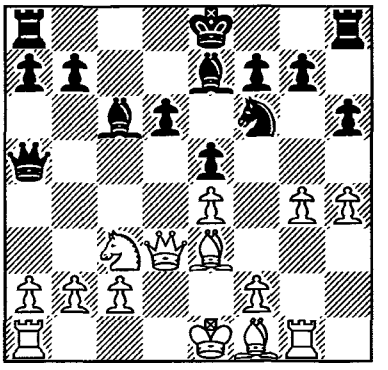


13...♕a5?

Unfortunately for Sax, he conceived a sharp tactical operation. 13...d5?! was dubious: 14 exd5 ♘xd5 15 0-0-0! ♘xe3 16 ♕xe3 ♕a5 17 ♗b5! 0-0?! (17...♗xb5? 18 ♕xe5) 18 g5 (Dvoretsky) 18...hxg5 19 hxg5 ♗xb5 20 ♘d5! ♖fe8 (20...♕d8 21 ♕xe5) 21 ♘f6+!, or 17...a6 18 ♗xc6+ (18 ♕xe5 axb5 19 ♕xg7 ♖f8 is not altogether clear) 18... bxc6 19 ♕f3!? (if immediately 19 g5, then 19...hxg5 20 hxg5 ♖b8! with the idea of ...♕b6) 19...♕b6 (19...0-0 20 g5!) 20 ♘e4 ♖b8 21 b3, and the difference in the placing of the kings is clearly in White's favour.

But 13...♘h7! was much better, with the idea of stifling the opponent's attacking pawn chain: after 14 h5 ♗g5! 15 0-0-0 0-0, or 14

0-0-0 ♗xh4 15 ♘b5 0-0 16 ♘xd6 (16 ♕xd6 ♕a5!) 16...♕f6 and ...♖fd8 Black has a solid position. Karpov suggests the gambit 14 g5 hxg5 15 ♘d5 'with a slight advantage to White'. Dvoretsky objects: 'The pawn sacrifice is tempting, but it is not clear whether it is correct: 15...gxh4 16 ♖xg7 ♘f6 18 0-0-0 h3.' I would add that also after 15...♘f6 it is not at all easy, if at all possible, to demonstrate an advantage for White.



14 0-0-0 ♘xe4

It is too late to deviate: if 14...0-0-0? White has the strong 15 ♕c4 ♘xe4 16 ♘d5! ♗xh4 17 ♕xe4 ♕xa2 18 ♗c4 (Dvoretsky), or 15 g5! hxg5 16 hxg5 ♘xe4 (if 16...♘h5(d7), then 17 ♕c4!) 17 ♘xe4 d5 18 ♘d2!, and the knight sacrifice proves incorrect: 18...d4 (18...g6 19 ♔b1 and ♘b3) 19 ♘b3 ♕xa2 20 ♕f5+ ♖d7 21 ♕xe5 dxe3 22 ♖xd7 ♔xd7 23 ♗c4 and wins.

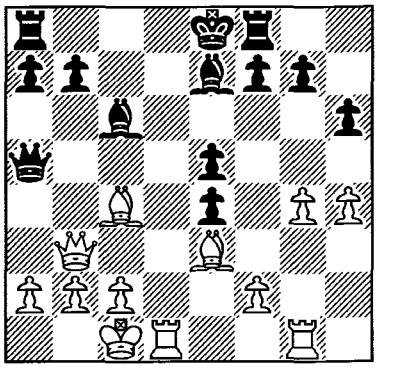
15 ♘xe4 d5 16 ♕b3

Karpov attaches an exclamation mark to this strong move: 'Now Black is forced to take the knight, after which his king is unable to shelter on either wing and remains dangerously placed in the centre.'

However, an unexpected and pretty idea of grandmaster Bologan was even stronger: 16 ♘d2! d4 (16...♕xa2 17 ♕f5!) 17 ♘b3 ♕xa2 18 ♕f5!! dxe3 19 ♗c4 0-0 20 g5 with a winning attack (pointed out by Dvoretsky). For example: 20...e2 21 gxh6! exd1♕+ 22 ♖xd1 ♗e4 (22...♗f6 23 ♖g1) 23 ♕xe4 ♗f6 24 ♖d6.

16...dxe4 17 ♗c4 ♖f8

'The black rook occupies an awkward position, in which it remains to the end of the game. But 17...0-0 was bad due to 18 g5 hxg5 19 ♗xg5 with a very strong attack' (Karpov): 19...♗xg5+ 20 hxg5 and ♕h3!



18 ♖d5!?

A spectacular positional exchange sacrifice, although 18 g5! hxg5 19 hxg5 suggests itself, for example: 19...♕b4? 20 g6! fxg6 21 ♕xb4 ♗xb4 22 ♖xg6, or 20...♕xb3 21 gxf7+ ♖xf7 22 axb3, getting through to the g7-pawn. But here Karpov did not like 'Black's only chance –19...g6: it was not clear to me whether I should provoke this move.' The situation is clarified by 20 ♖h1!, a move pointed out by grandmaster Motylev: if 20...♕b4? White wins immediately by 21 ♗xf7+! ♖xf7 22 ♕e6. Of course, 20...♖d8 is essential, but then 21 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 22 ♖d1! is strong.

Roughly the same happens after the immediate 19...♖d8 20 ♖xd8+ ♗xd8 21 ♖d1! (21 c3 ♗e7! is not so clear – Dvoretsky) 21...♗e7 22 a3!, when White has total domination: Black's downfall is caused by his 'bad' king. 19...♖c8 20 ♗d5 ♕b4 21 ♗xc6+ ♖xc6 22 ♕d5 ♕d6 23 ♕xe4 etc. is only slightly better.

18...♗xd5 (Black has to take the exchange: if 18...♕c7, then 19 ♗b5!) **19 ♗xd5 ♖d8!?**

'The natural move, but possibly not the best. After 19...♕b4 20 ♗xb7 ♕xb3 21 axb3 ♖b8 the simplest is 22 ♗xe4.' (Karpov)

However, Dvoretsky recommends 21...♔d7!

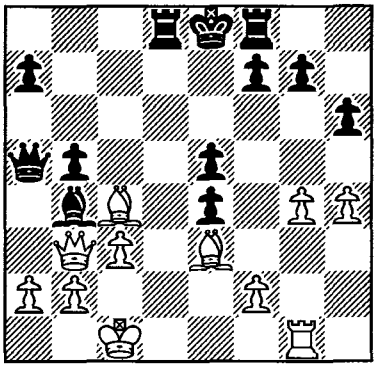
22 ♖d1+ ♔e6! 23 ♗d5+ ♔f6 with drawing chances, but also a move earlier – 20 ♕xb4! ♗xb4 21 ♗xb7 ♖b8 (21...♖d8 22 c3(a3) 22...♗d6 23 ♗xa7) 22 ♗c6+ ♔e7 23 ♗xa7 ♖a8 (23...♖bc8 24 ♗xe4) 24 ♗xa8 ♖xa8 25 ♗e3 ♖xa2 26 ♔b1 with good winning chances, whereas 'after the move in the game the play is more double-edged.'

20 ♗c4!

Avoiding the exchange of the dark-squared bishops: 20 ♗xe4 ♗c5!, while if 20 ♗xb7?!, then not only 20...♗c5 (Karpov) was possible, but also 20...♗xh4! (Dvoretsky).

20...♗b4! (not 20...♗c5? 21 ♗b5+ or 20...♗d6? 21 ♕xb7 ♕c7 22 ♕xe4) **21 c3 b5!**

'In the event of 21...♗d6 22 ♕xb7 ♕c7 White could have chosen between an overwhelming endgame – 23 ♕xc7 ♗xc7 24 ♗xa7 and a continuation of the attack – 23 ♕xe4. Also 22 g5!? hxg5 23 ♖xg5 was very strong.' (Dvoretsky)

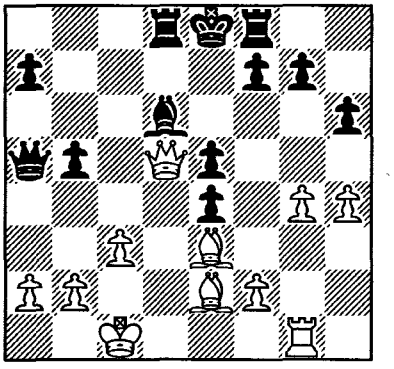


22 ♗e2!

"Of course, the light-squared bishop has to be retained. The consequences of 22 cxb4 were unclear: 22...bxc4 23 ♕xc4.' (Karpov). Indeed, after 23...♕d5 (Dvoretsky) 24 ♕xd5 (24 ♕c7 ♖d7 with a draw or 24...f6!?) 24...♖xd5 25 ♗xa7 ♔d7! it is rather White who would have had to think about how to draw.

22...♗d6 23 ♕d5!

'There was no point in playing 23 ♗xb5+, since after 23...♔e7 the black rooks gain scope.' (Karpov). And if 23 g5, then 23...b4! was possible (Dvoretsky).



23...♔e7?

'The critical moment. 23...♕xc3+? 24 ♔b1! ♕xb2+ 25 ♔xb2 ♗a3+ 26 ♔xa3 ♖xd5 27 ♗xa7 was bad for Black, but better chances of a defence were offered by 23...♕c7, after which White would have faced a difficult choice,' writes Karpov, indicating two possibilities: 24 g5, provoking 24...♕xc3+?! 25 ♔b1, when White gains the c-file, or 24 ♗xb5+ ♔e7 25 ♔c2 – 'a useful prophylactic move', although, according to Dvoretsky, after 25...♖b8 26 ♖d1 (26 g5 ♕b7) 26...♖fd8 27 ♗c4 ♔f8 the outcome is unclear. Therefore, in my view, it is better to play 25 ♕xe4 ♖b8 26 ♗c4 ♕b7 27 ♕c2! ♖fc8 28 ♗b3, nevertheless retaining an advantage.

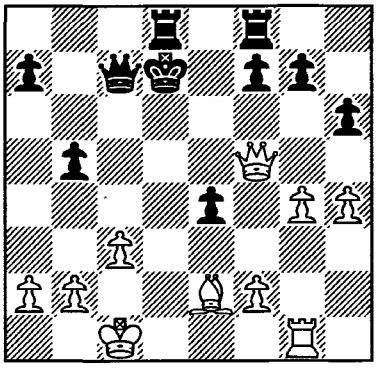
In addition, Dvoretsky recommended 23...a6, and 'after 24 ♖d1 ♕c7 25 ♕xe4 White would have retained sufficient compensation for the sacrificed exchange, but evidently not more.' However, 24 ♕c6+! is stronger: 24...♔e7 25 ♖d1 ♖d7 (not 25...♕c7? 26 ♖xd6, 25...♕xa2? 26 ♗c5 ♕e6 27 g5! or 25...f6? 26 ♔b1! ♖d7 27 ♗b6 ♕a4 28 b3 ♕a3 29 ♖xd6!) 26 a3 ♕d8 (26...♖fd8? 27 ♗b6 ♕a4 28 c4! or 26...♖b8? 27 g5! and ♗g4 is bad for Black) 27 ♕xa6 ♕a8 28 ♕xb5 ♖b8 29 ♕d5, and the three connected passed pawns, supported by the bishops, give White winning chances.

24 ♗c5! (it would appear that Sax missed this strong move: this bishop exchange is now

advantageous to White) **24...♗xc5**

Black cannot play either 24...♕c7 25 ♕xe5+ ♔d7 26 ♗xd6 ♕xd6 27 ♖d1, or 24...f6 25 ♗c4! (Karpov).

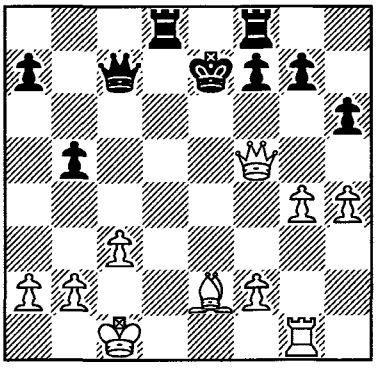
25 ♕xe5+ ♔d7 26 ♕xc5 ♕c7 27 ♕f5+



27...♔e7?

In this game the e7-square was a truly fatal one for Sax! 27...♔c6 28 ♕xb5+ ♔d6 was more tenacious, although 29 ♕b4+ favours White after both 29...♕c5 30 ♕xe4!, and 29...♔e5 30 f3! (30 f4+ ♔xf4 31 ♖f1+ ♔e3 is less clear) with a terribly strong attack, for example: 30...f5 31 gxf5 ♖xf5 32 fxe4 ♖f2 33 ♕b5+ or 30...♕b6 31 ♕e7+ ♔d5 (31...♕e6 32 f4+! ♔xf4 33 ♕c5 e3 34 ♗c4 and wins) 32 ♖e1! ♔c6 33 a4! a6 34 b4 etc.

28 ♕xe4+ ♔d7 29 ♕f5+ ♔e7



30 ♖e1!

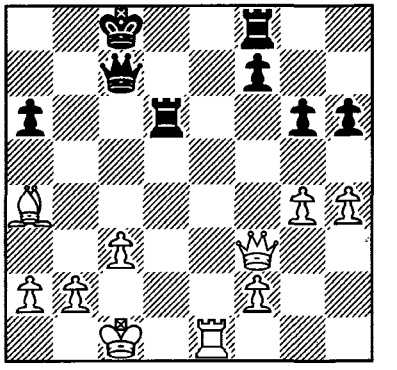
'After lengthy reflection I managed to find the best way of maintaining the tension, even when the black king hides at d8.' (Karpov)

30...♖d6 31 ♗c4+! (not allowing the black rook to go to e6) **31...♔d8 32 ♗xb5 a6**

32...♖f6 33 ♕d5+ ♖d6 (33...♔c8 34 ♖e7!!, as in the game) 34 ♕a8+ ♕c8 35 ♕xa7 was no better for Black.

33 ♗a4! g6 34 ♕f3! ♔c8

This loses immediately. 34...♕c4 would have prolonged the agony, for example: 35 ♗b3 ♕c6(7) 36 ♕f4, or 35 ♕a8+ ♕c8 36 ♕a7 ♕c7 37 ♕e3 etc.



35 ♖e7!! (an elegant mating finish) **35...♖d1+** (or 35...♕xe7 36 ♕a8+ ♔c7 37 ♕a7+) **36 ♔xd1 ♕xe7** (36...♖d8+ 37 ♖d7!) **37 ♕a8+ ♔c7 38 ♕a7+ ♔d6 39 ♕b6+ 1-0**

39...♔e5 40 ♕d4+ ♔e6 41 ♗b3 is mate.

Then the world champion won the jubilee, 50th USSR Championship (Moscow, April 1983): 1. Karpov – 9½ out of 15 (+5–1=9); 2. Tukmakov – 9; 3-4. Polugayevsky and Vaganian – 8½, etc. I did not take part in this tournament, since I had only just beaten Beliavsky in our quarter-final Candidates match and I was preparing for the semi-final match with Korchnoi.

This, the most important match of the entire cycle, which initially was wrecked by the Sports Committee on the orders of the Communist Party Central Committee and the KGB, as has already been described in some detail in the chapter 'Farewell to the Dream'.

Karpov took part in the Moscow negotiations with Campomanes, then invited me to his home, and we discussed the situation in private. He advised me to appeal to Aliev, then a Politburo member of the Communist Party Central Committee, and for his part he promised to arrange a meeting with Zimyanin, the Secretary of the Central Committee.

Somewhat later, when the FIDE President defaulted me for failing to appear in Pasadena, Karpov made a cautiously vague statement: 'Korchnoi has been awarded a win without playing, but his opponent failed to turn up for the match not because of his own caprice or illness, but as a result of attendant circumstances, that is, for non-chess reasons.'

It is clear that whose who created these circumstances and reasons were pursuing one aim: 'doing everything' to ensure that Kasparov did not qualify to play Karpov. Did the champion himself participate in the intrigue? In his book *Sestra moya Kaissa* (Caissa is my Sister) Anatoly Evgenyevich categorically denies this, maintaining that, on the contrary, he did a great deal to ensure that these matches – mine with Korchnoi and Smyslov's with Ribli – took place:

'I wanted everything to be honest and done with a clear conscience. At that time Kasparov was not yet a serious rival to me. I saw all his weaknesses and I had no doubt that I would cope with him at the chessboard without particular difficulty. This match was even in my interests: the earlier we met, the more crushing would be the score (and the course of the first match showed that this reckoning was correct)... Wouldn't you agree that this is a simple argument against all Kasparov's fabrications about my villainous plans and actions?... I even had to fly to the Philippines: we all thought that in the interests of the affair it would do no harm to make use of my good relations with Campomanes. And this reckoning was justified.'

Karpov's reasonable arguments have one flaw: they were put forward after the event, after the fourth of our matches. But then, in the summer of 1983, it was not at all clear on what such optimism by the champion could be based: I was winning all the competitions, one after another, I had already received my first chess 'Oscar' (and soon also the second), my rating was rising rapidly, and by the end of the year it was already higher than Karpov's (the first time it had been exceeded during the entire post-Fischer decade!). And none of his 'good relations with Campomanes' would have helped, if at that historic moment Aliev's political resources had proved inadequate. Not without reason did Smyslov later say to me: 'Young man, if the history of our semi-final matches had occurred not in the summer of 1983, but somewhat earlier *(i.e. before November 1982, when Brezhnev died, and Aliev became a member of the Politburo –G.K.)*, we would never have met in the final.'

In August the world champion won a category 9 tournament in Hanover, after suffering a sensational defeat in the first round against the master Hartman (with White in a Keres Attack!) and then scoring eight wins with six draws: 1. Karpov – 11 out of 15; 2. Georgadze – 10½; 3. Balashov – 10, etc. In September I won the super-tournament in Niksic – 11 out of 14, and in October Karpov in turn celebrated his fifth triumph in Tilburg – 7 out of 11 (+3=8).

By winning my long-suffering match with Korchnoi in December, and the final match against the evergreen Smyslov in April 1984, I gave a conclusive reply to the question that had long been in the air, regarding who would be the world champion's next opponent.

That spring the champion quite confidently won two good tournaments – in Oslo (+3=6) and in London: 1. Karpov – 9 out of 13; 2-3. Chandler and Polugayevsky – 8; 4. Timman – 7½; 5-6. Ribli and Seirawan – 7; 7-8. Korchnoi and Vaganian – 6½, etc. Here 'for old times' sake' he defeated Korchnoi, who after the ending of the boycott again began playing in tournaments against Soviet grandmasters.

In June Karpov and I played in the long-awaited second match between the USSR and the Rest of the World. Our first three boards were known: Karpov, Kasparov and Polugayevsky. But our opponents, endeavouring to improve their result, cunningly changed their board order: Korchnoi was dispatched to torment Polugayevsky, the impregnable Andersson 'manned the goal' against Karpov, and the experienced Timman was thrown against the 'hot-tempered' Kasparov. This plan only partially justified itself: Korchnoi did indeed beat Polugayevsky (+1=3, including a draw with the reserve Tukmakov), but Karpov and I defeated our opponents by the same score. Our team also won: 21-19.

On 10th December 1984 in Moscow the unlimited Karpov-Kasparov match for the world championship began. In the 1st game the opening was... a Keres Attack! However, here I am forced to interrupt my account, since this will be the topic of Volume 7, which will be devoted to my matches with Karpov.

Super-Final

In July 1985, before our second match, Karpov won a double-round tournament in Amsterdam with 7 out of 10 (+4=6), half a point ahead of Timman. Here he alternated between 1 e4 and 1 ♘f3, and in the match with me – between 1 e4 and 1 d4. In the decisive 24th game, in which only a win would satisfy him, the world champion began with his favourite king's pawn, and the very logic of the play in a complicated Sicilian demanded that he should expose his rear by g2-g4-g5. He held the initiative, but on the 23rd move he delayed, on the 36th move he made a time-trouble blunder – and he lost the match (11-13) and also his title.

After the serious shock of not winning our first match and losing the second, another player would have required a lengthy period of rehabilitation, but Karpov brilliantly displayed his determination by immediately plunging into the thick of tournament battles, in order to attain optimal form for the forthcoming return match in 1986. Already in November he led the USSR team at the World Team Championship in Lucerne (+3=4), in January in Vienna he look part for the first time in 20 years in a 'Swiss', but a strong one (+3=6), in the spring he was easily victorious in Brussels (9 out of 11, 2 points ahead of Korchnoi and 2½ ahead of Miles, Timman and Torre), and early in the summer he won a double-round super-tournament in Bugojno: 1. Karpov – 8½ out of 14; 2-3. Ljubojevic and A.Sokolov – 7½, etc.

In Bugojno Karpov suffered his only defeat over a period of six months – against the new bright star of Soviet chess, Andrey Sokolov (with Black in a Ruy Lopez, Zaitsev Variation). The rapid rise of Sokolov, a contemporary of mine and a pupil of the experienced Moscow trainer Vladimir Yurkov, indicated his enormous chess potential: world junior champion (1982), USSR Champion (1984), one of the winners of the Interzonal tournament in Biel and the Candidates tournament in Montpellier (1985). Early in 1986 in the Candidates semi-final match he crushed Vaganian 6-2, while in the other semi-final Artur Yusupov defeated Timman in excellent style – 6-3.

The unprecedented marathon for the world championship arranged by FIDE (four matches over the course of forty months, the first being of 48 games!) gave rise to a serious problem, which Korchnoi had thought about on the eve of the 32nd game of the match in Baguio: the loser of a return match physically does not have time to take part in the next qualifying cycle. And FIDE found an extraordinary way out of the situation: the winner of the final Candidates match of the new cycle would gain the right to play not with the world champion, but with the loser of the return match, and only the winner of this 'super-final' would qualify for a match with the champion.

In the autumn of 1986, at the same time as I was winning the dramatic return match

against Karpov (12½-11½), Sokolov and Yusupov played what was perhaps an even more dramatic final Candidates match: towards the finish Artur was leading 6-4, but then he lost three games in a row! A draw in the last, 14th game summed up his suffering – 6½-7½. Andrey confirmed his reputation as a 'person without nerve'.

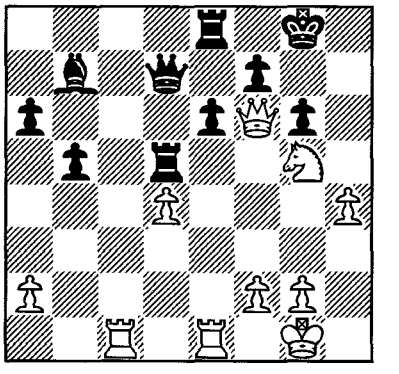
After this prelude, the Karpov-Sokolov super-final match (Linares, February-March 1987) looked a highly intriguing event and was awaited with great interest. Play was to the best of 14 games. This match is worthy dwelling on in detail, since with it a new stage in Karpov's career effectively begins.

When analysing matches for the world championship, we have seen many times how champions, after losing to younger, rising opponents, began to lose faith in themselves and ceased to be at the forefront of modern chess thinking. But with Karpov, by contrast, his failures in the matches of 1985 and 1986 only added to his motivation! Displaying a rare chess flexibility, he succeeded in completely readjusting and developing for himself a new playing method. Thanks to this, for another ten years the 12th world champion battled at the highest level, won a number of matches for the FIDE championship and gained a brilliant victory in Linares (1994), which is rightly regarded as one of the most outstanding tournament triumphs in the history of chess.

First of all, the results of the 1984-86 matches led to Karpov realising the need to change his opening repertoire. In principle he had already switched to 1 d4 in our return match, but it was the match with Sokolov which showed that his switch was conclusive. Apparently the ex-champion realised that it was too hard for him to maintain control over the situation in the sharp variations of the Sicilian Defence (incidentally, Sokolov, like myself, happily played the 'Scheveningen') and that the closed games were nevertheless closer to his tastes and more in keeping with his overall approach to chess.

In addition, Karpov sprung a surprise with Black: starting with this match a solid place in his arsenal was taken by the Caro-Kann Defence with 4...♘d7 – a very sound weapon, which he was to use right up to the start of the 21st century (more details about this will be given in the next volume).

In the 1st game after **1 e4 c6** by playing **2 c4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 exd5 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘xd5 6 ♘f3 e6 7 d4** Sokolov obtained a position from the Semi-Tarrasch Defence to the Queen's Gambit: **7...♗e7** (7...♘c6 8 ♗d3 Beliavsky-Karpov, Moscow 1986; cf. *Volume 2, Game No.117*) **8 ♗c4 0-0 9 0-0 ♘c6 10 ♖e1** (one of Botvinnik's *tabiyas* – *Volume 2, Game No.36*) **10...a6 11 ♗b3!? ♘xc3 12 bxc3 b5 13 ♕d3,** and White retained some initiative. The critical moment arose on the 25th move.



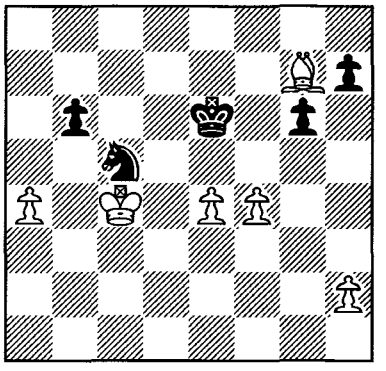
25 ♖c5?!

Andrey later regretted that he did not play 25 ♘e4! 'with winning chances'. Then Black would have had to find the only move 25...♖h5 and after 26 ♕xg6! (26 ♘g5 ♗d5 is unclear, as is 26 d5 ♕xd5! 27 ♖c5 ♕xc5 28 ♘xc5 ♖xc5, as pointed out by Makarichev) 26...fxg6 27 ♘f6+ ♔g7 28 ♘xd7 ♖xh4 29 ♖c7 ♗d5 30 ♘e5+ ♔g8 31 ♘xg6 he would still have had to fight for equality.

25...♕e7 26 ♖xe6! ♕xf6! 27 ♖xf6 ♖d7, with a draw on the 36th move. Nevertheless, the course of the opening encounter appeared to confirm the opinion of many of the ex-

perts, that the match would prove a difficult test for Karpov.

In the 2nd game Karpov chose a topical line of the Queen's Indian Defence with 4 g3 (cf. *Game No.90*, note to White's 19th move), which occurred several times in my matches with him. The game was adjourned in a bishop against knight ending that was slightly better for White. But the defence for Black was rather unpleasant – especially against Karpov! And at the end of the second time control Sokolov faltered.



56...♘xe4??

'A draw would have been achieved by 56...♘xa4 57 ♗d4 ♔d6 58 ♔b5 (nothing is given by 58 e5+ ♔e6 59 h4 h6, intending ...g6-g5) 58...♘c5 59 ♗xc5+ bxc5 60 h4 h6 61 ♔c4 ♔c6 62 e5 h5 63 ♔d3 ♔d7, and Black keeps the distant opposition.' (Makarichev)

57 ♔b5 ♘c5 58 ♗f8!! (after 58 a5 bxa5 59 ♔xc5 ♔f5 Black succeeds in eliminating the enemy pawns) **58...♘d7** (58...♘xa4 59 ♔xa4 ♔f5 60 ♗d6) **59 ♗a3 ♔d5** (59...♔f5 60 ♗d6) **60 ♗e7 ♔d4 61 ♗d8 1-0**

Since Sokolov had a narrow opening repertoire, with White playing only 1 e4, after which there invariably followed 1...c6, and with Black in reply to 1 d4 choosing only the Queen's Indian Defence, it was in this small field that some interesting theoretical battles ensued: in the eleven games there were six Caro-Kanns and five Queen's Indians!

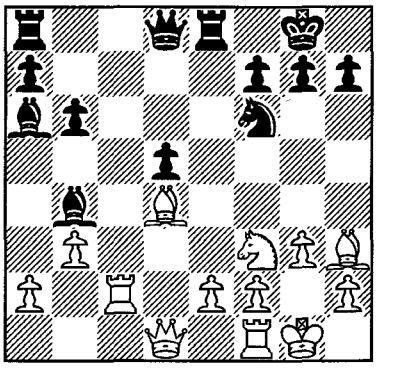
The next three games ended in draws, and it appeared that Sokolov might still be able to show his worth closer to the end of the match. The 6th game was destined to become decisive.

Game 90
A.Karpov-A.Sokolov
Candidates Match,
Linares 1987, 6th game
Queen's Indian Defence E15

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♗a6 5 b3 ♗b4+ 6 ♗d2 ♗e7 7 ♘c3 (7 ♗g2 – *Game No.98*) **7...d5** (7...0-0 – *Game No.91*) **8 cxd5 ♘xd5 9 ♘xd5 exd5 10 ♗g2 ♘d7 11 0-0 0-0 12 ♖c1 ♖e8**

12...c5 would have allowed White an additional possibility – 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 ♘e1 ♘b6 15 a4 ♖c8 16 a5 ½-½ (Kasparov-Karpov, 14th matchgame, Moscow 1984/85). And although experience has shown that the knight manoeuvre to d3 is not especially dangerous for Black, 12...♖e8 denies White this choice (13 ♘e1? ♗a3).

13 ♖e1 c5 (following the 2nd game; the 4th went 13...♗d6, and White held some initiative) **14 ♗e3 ♗b7 15 ♗h3 cxd4 16 ♗xd4 ♘f6 17 ♖c2 ♗b4 18 ♖f1 ♗a6**



19 ♘h4!?

In the 2nd game Karpov decided to immediately vacate the d4-square for his knight – 19 ♗b2. Instead of 19...♗f8 Sokolov could have chosen the more active 19...♗c5

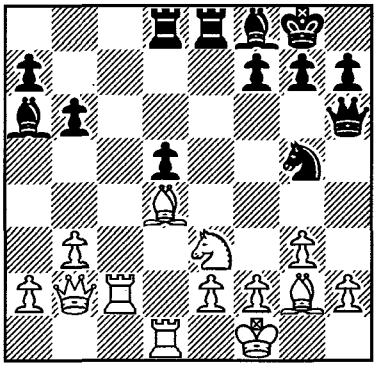
chosen the more active 19...♗c5 (19...♘e4 is also good, since 20 ♗xg7 is not dangerous on account of 20...♔xg7 21 ♕d4+ ♘f6 22 ♕xb4 ♗xe2, winning the exchange) 20 a3 ♕e7 21 ♘d4 (21 b4?! ♕xe2!) 21...♗c8!

Karpov intends ♘f5, which is associated not only with a potential threat to the g7-point, but also with the manoeuvre of the knight to e3 for an attack on the d5-pawn (lo and behold, the bishop will return to g2 with the same aim).

19...♗f8 20 ♘f5 ♘e4 21 ♘e3

By creating pressure on the isolated pawn, White maintains the position in a state of dynamic balance. After 21 ♗b2 ♗c8 22 ♕d4 f6 or 21 ♕c1 ♘g5! 22 ♗g4 h5! the initiative would have passed to Black.

21...♕d6 22 ♕c1 ♖ad8 23 ♖d1 (White has carried out the intended regrouping...) **23...♕h6 24 ♗g2 ♘g5 25 ♕b2 ♘h3+ 26 ♔f1 ♘g5**



But the opponent's counterplay does not allow him to 'work on' the isolated pawn.

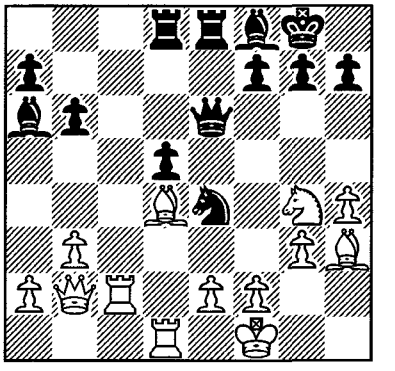
27 ♔g1

Here Karpov had a difficult task to solve. For example, the attack 27 ♘f5 ♕xh2 28 ♗xg7 is parried by 28...d4! This breakthrough sets White unpleasant problems. After 29 ♘h6+ ♔xg7 30 ♘g4 there is the brilliant stroke 30...♖xe2! (Zaitsev looked at 30...♕h5 31 ♖xd4 ♗a3 32 ♕a1 when White wins; he also mentioned 30...♖xe2, but didn't notice Black's next move) 31 ♖xe2 ♗a3! – a refinement by the computer, forcing White to think about how to save the game (32 ♕c2 ♕h5 33 ♕f5 ♕g6).

27...♘h3+ 28 ♔f1 ♘g5 29 h4!?

Realising that, in a long match, a score of +1 did not yet guarantee him anything, Karpov decided to sharpen the play. This move weakens the king, but analysis shows that the risk was not very great and that the ex-champion's evaluation was correct, although he had to endure some anxious moments when Sokolov launched an attack.

29...♘e4 30 ♘g4 ♕e6 (the prelude to some stormy events; however, 30...♕g6!? 31 ♘e5 ♕f5 would have maintained the considerable tension without any dangerous adventures) **31 ♗h3**



31...♗a3!?

31...♕g6 looks less committing, although after 32 ♘e5 all the same a piece has to be sacrificed, if Black does not want to come under pressure (32...♕f6 33 ♘d3 ♕h6 34 ♕c1). So, 32...♘xg3+!? 33 fxg3 ♕xg3. Now in the event of 34 ♕c3 ♕h2 35 ♗g2 ♖c8 36 ♕f3 he has a choice between a spectacular draw: 36...♖xc2 37 ♕xf7+ ♔h8 38 ♕g8+! with perpetual check, and 36...♖xe5 37 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 38 ♖xc8 ♗xc8 – White picks up the d5-pawn, but Black has excellent compensation for the exchange. The immediate 34 ♗g2! is better for White, and after 34...♕xh4 Black has three pawns for a knight – it is hard to give a more definite evaluation.

It is clear that Black's attack was dangerous, although the wealth of tempting possibilities harboured the risk of him making the incorrect choice, as in fact happened. 31...♗a3 is a very spectacular move, but at the end of the combinative storm White gained a slight advantage in the endgame.

32 ♕xa3 ♗xe2+!

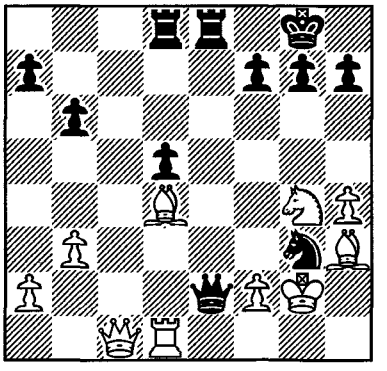
32...♘xg3+? loses to 33 ♔g2! ♕e4+ 34 ♔xg3 ♕xc2 35 ♘h6+ gxh6 36 ♖g1.

33 ♖xe2

33 ♔xe2 ♘c3++ 34 ♔d3 ♕e4+ 35 ♔xc3 ♖c8+ 36 ♗c5 ♖xc5+ 37 ♕xc5 bxc5 38 ♔b2 d4 39 ♖cd2 was interesting. In the resulting unusual position White has a material advantage, but his pieces are not coordinated, and therefore Black should manage to create adequate counterplay after, say, 39...a5. Karpov chose a clearer path.

33...♘xg3+ 34 ♔g2 ♕xe2 35 ♕c1!

This excellent move was most probably underestimated by Sokolov. The queen not only defends the rook, but also eyes the kingside. Moreover, the black knight is forced to retreat to h5, because the leap into the centre 35...♘e4 runs into the dagger-blows 36 ♘h6+! gxh6 37 ♕xh6 f6 38 ♖g1!



35...♘h5 36 ♔h2!

The commentators considered 36 ♕g5 ♕xd1 37 ♘h6+ ♔f8 38 ♗b2 g6 39 ♗a3+ ♔g7 40 ♗e7, concluding their evidence of a decisive advantage for Black with the move found by Polugayevsky, 40...♕a1!, which, like the entire preceding chain, the computer 'finds' instantly: 41 ♘f5+ ♔h8 42 ♗xd8 f6! 43 ♕g4 ♕e5. To complete the picture, it should be mentioned that 37 ♘f6+ ♔h8 38 ♕xh5 ♕xh5 39 ♘xh5 f6 40 ♘g3 ♔g8 41 h5 ♔f7 leads to a position where, with an unusual balance of forces, the advantage is also with Black.

36...♖d6

Black has to defend the 6th rank, since 36...f6 loses by force: 37 ♘h6+! gxh6 38 ♖g1+ ♔h8 39 ♕xh6 ♖e5 40 ♖g3! ♖g8 41 ♗g4!

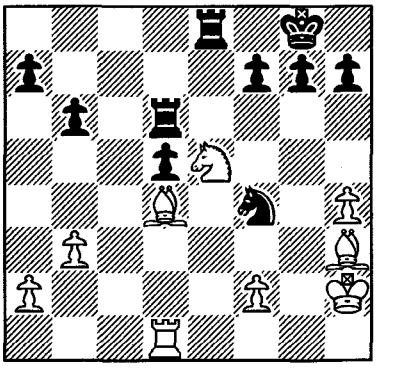
37 ♕d2

The exchange of queens is imminent, and the balance of forces is again unusual, White's rook and two bishops being better than Black's two rooks and two pawns.

37...♕f3

37...f6? again loses to 38 ♘h6+! ♔f8 39 ♗b2!, while the position after 37...h6 38 ♕xe2 ♖xe2 39 a4 does not greatly differ from that reached in the game. 'Forceful' attempts to demonstrate the opposite – 39...♖e4 40 ♘e3 g6 41 ♗g4 f5 42 ♗f3 ♖xh4+ 43 ♔g1 – may lead merely to increased difficulties for Black.

38 ♘e5 ♕f4+ 39 ♕xf4 ♘xf4



With the exchange of queens, the tension of the struggle diminishes sharply and a stage of unhurried manoeuvring begins. Karpov is very skilful in such positions, and here too he seeks the slightest chances. For a long time, as in the 2nd game, Sokolov demonstrates tenacity and caution.

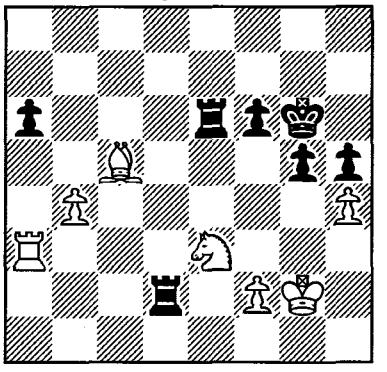
40 ♗d7 ♖d8 41 ♗b5 ♘e6 42 ♗b2 a6 43 ♗f1 ♖c8 44 ♖d2 d4 45 ♗g2 ♘f4 46 ♗f3 d3 47 ♘c4 ♖h6 48 ♔g3 ♘e2+ 49 ♗xe2 dxe2 50 ♖xe2 b5 51 ♘e3 ♖e6 52 ♖d2 h5 53 ♔f4 ♖c7 54 ♖d5 f6 55 ♗a3

55 ♖xh5 is hardly advisable – after 55...♖d6 Black becomes active and regains the pawn. By playing his bishop to c5, on the contrary, Karpov restricts the activity of the black rooks, and then, after supporting his bishop by 57 b4, begins play on the queenside with the unexpected manoeuvre of his rook from d5 to a1.

55...g6 56 ♗c5 ♔f7 57 b4 ♔e8 58 ♖d1! ♖d7 59 ♖a1! ♖d2

White achieves the creation of a weakness at a6, but in return Black succeeds in activating his rook.

60 ♔f3 ♔f7 61 a4 bxa4 62 ♖xa4 g5 63 ♖a3 ♔g6 64 ♔g2



64...gxh4?!

Losing patience, Sokolov makes a step towards disaster. He thought that there were no particular dangers, and with this capture (transforming Black's pawn chain into a ruin) he decided simply to reduce the number of white pawns, relying on the hypothetical possibility of another exchange after ...a6-a5. For a time, a nominal but, alas, unreal equilibrium is established on the board. In the given situation the rook and two minor pieces protected by pawns prove stronger than the two rooks and weak pawns, which need to be constantly guarded.

65 ♘f1 ♖c2 66 ♘h2 ♖c4 67 ♘f3 ♔f7 68 ♔h2

The seemingly more vigorous 68 ♘d4 ♖e5 69 ♘c6 could have led almost by force – 69...♖g5+ 70 ♔h2 ♖gxc5! 71 bxc5 ♖xc5 72 ♖xa6 ♖c2 73 ♔g1 h3 74 f4 h2+ 75 ♔h1 ♖f2 – to a position where White, playing without his king, would be unlikely to be able to save his only pawn. For example: 76 ♖a4 h4 77 ♘a7 ♔g6 78 ♘b5 ♔f5 79 ♘d6+ ♔g4 80 f5+ ♔h3 81 ♖a1 ♔g4 82 ♖d1 ♔f4 83 ♖d5 ♖e2.

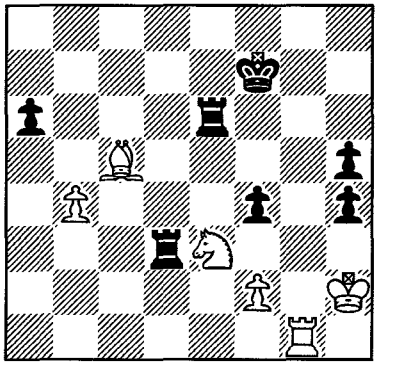
68...♖f4 69 ♔g2 ♖ee4?!

It is strange that Sokolov does not repeat the position (perhaps in order to avoid 70 ♘d4?). He could hardly have been hoping that this trap would work: 70 ♖xa6?? h3+ 71 ♔g3 h4+. Karpov does not hurry and continues manoeuvring.

70 ♘d2 ♖e6 71 ♘f1! ♖g4+ 72 ♔h3 ♖f4 73 ♖a2 ♖f3+ 74 ♔g2 ♖d3

If the rook is kept on the 4th rank – 74...♖f4, then after 75 ♘e3 f5 76 ♘d5 ♖g6+ 77 ♔h2 ♖fg4 78 ♖a1! ♖g2+ 79 ♔h1 ♖2g5 80 ♘c7 the a6-pawn is lost.

75 ♘e3 ♔g6 76 ♖a1 f5?! (this advance merely makes the pawn more vulnerable) **77 ♔h2 f4 78 ♖g1+ ♔f7**



79 ♘g2!

Beginning the gathering of the harvest. Exploiting the fact that the bishop at c5 is defending the f2-pawn, White wins one of the pawns.

79...♖c6

Black could have tried to confuse matters by 79...♖f6 80 ♘xh4 ♔e6, intending to attack the bishop with ...♔d5 and to try and eliminate the queenside pawns (...a6-a5). But White wins by both 81 ♖g8 ♔d5 82 ♖g5+ ♔c4 83 ♖xh5 ♖d5 84 ♖h7 a5 85 ♖c7 ♖a6 86 ♗f8+ ♔d3 87 bxa5 ♖dxa5 88 ♔h3, and 81 ♘g6 ♖d5 82 ♖e1+ ♔f7 83 ♘e5+ ♔g7 84 ♘c4 ♔h6 85 ♘b6 ♖g5 86 ♘d7 ♖ff5 87 ♖a1 ♖g6 88 ♘b8, when the a6-pawn cannot be saved.

80 ♘xf4 ♖f3 81 ♘h3

The remainder can now be considered a matter of technique: Black does not gain any counterplay, and his weak h-pawns are doomed.

81...♔f6 82 ♖e1 ♖f5 83 ♖e4 a5

Sokolov has nevertheless succeeded in exchanging the queenside pawns. But White's sole remaining pawn is quite sufficient for victory.

84 ♗e3! axb4 85 ♖xb4 ♖a6 86 ♖xh4 ♖aa5 87 ♖c4 ♖fb5 88 ♔g3 ♖a8 89 ♔h4 ♖g8 90 ♗g5+ 1-0

Of course, Sokolov could have played on, but he realised that it would be a futile waste of time. The match score became 4-2.

Zaitsev: 'Sometimes the slightest indicators enable you to establish a person's mental state. Top-class chess is not without its great anxiety, sufferings and perhaps even shocks. When on the staircase I bumped into Andrey, returning together with his trainer from the adjournment session of the 6th game, I thought how basically tragic sport can be. And yet Sokolov is one of the few who can endure a defeat comparatively easily.'

To all appearances, this game determined the outcome of the match. It is not easy to recover from such a blow of fate: you appear to be doing everything correctly, you give your all, but the opponent coolly demonstrates that all your efforts are in vain... Andrey nevertheless displayed courage, and the following three games were drawn after a tough fight.

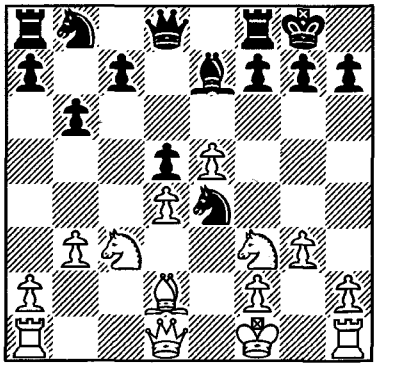
But in the 10th game, where a complicated ending arose, he again fell under the inexorable Karpov 'steam-roller'.

Game 91

A.Karpov-A.Sokolov

Candidates Match,
Linares 1987, 10th game
Queen's Indian Defence E15

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♗a6 5 b3 ♗b4+ 6 ♗d2 ♗e7 7 ♘c3 (7 ♗g2 – *Game No.98*) **7...0-0** (7...d5 – *Game No.90*) **8 e4 d5 9 cxd5 ♗xf1 10 ♔xf1 exd5 11 e5 ♘e4**



12 ♕e2

The 8th game went 12 ♖c1 c5! 13 ♔g2 ♘c6 14 ♖e1 ♘xc3 15 ♗xc3 ♕d7 16 ♕d3 ♖ac8 17 ♗d2 h6 with equality.

12...♘xc3 13 ♗xc3 ♕d7 14 ♔g2 ♘c6

Not bad, but subsequently they came to prefer the immediate 14...c5 15 ♖he1 ♕e6 16 ♘g1 (Karpov's idea, which became popular after this game) 16...♘c6 17 dxc5 d4 18 ♗d2 ♗xc5, when the passed d-pawn gives Black splendid play. This occurred in the game Agdestein-Karpov (2nd matchgame, Görvik 1991), in which Black employed the most correct move order and after 19 ♕e4 ♖fe8 20 f4 ♖ad8 21 ♘f3 d3 22 ♘g5 ♕d5 he was excellently placed.

The point of the move chosen by Sokolov is to transfer the knight to an ideal blockading

post at e6. Then Black will play ...c7-c5 in a more favourable situation. However, Karpov discloses certain defects in this plan with a subtle manoeuvre.

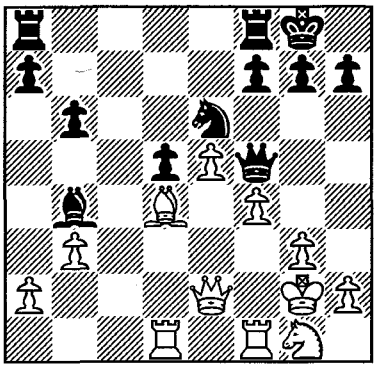
15 ♖he1 ♘d8 16 ♘g1! (planning f2-f4, which emphasises the instability of the knight's position at e6) **16...c5**

This way is not without some strategic risk. White's offensive could have been neutralised by 16...♘e6 17 f4 g6 18 ♘f3 ♖ae8, preparing the blockading ...f7-f5 with a perfectly acceptable game.

17 f4 cxd4 18 ♗xd4

Black has acquired a passed pawn, but it needs defending. Therefore he faces a struggle for equality. To some extent the scenario of this game resembles the 2nd and 6th games, where initially Sokolov defended well and created counter-chances, but then the tension got to him and he went wrong, which Karpov skilfully exploited.

18...♕f5 19 ♖ad1 ♗b4 20 ♖f1 ♘e6



21 ♕d3! ♕xd3

Black was short of one tempo (...g7-g6) for setting up a blockade on the light squares. Now it would be too risky to play 21...g6 22 ♕xf5 gxf5, since the defects in his pawn structure would only promise problems.

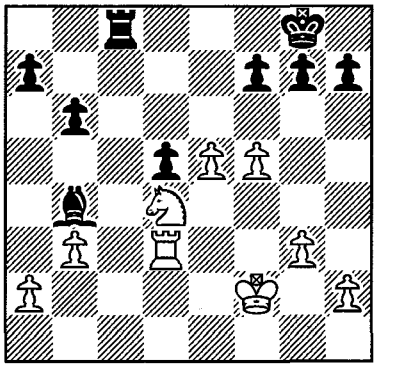
22 ♖xd3 ♖ac8 23 ♘f3 ♖c2+?!

It was more cautious to restrict the opponent's possibilities by 23...g6. No advantage for White is evident after either 24 ♖f2 ♖fd8 25 ♗b2 (25 ♖e2!?) 25...d4! 26 ♘xd4 ♗c5 27 ♖fd2 ♘xd4 28 ♗xd4 ♖xd4 29 ♖xd4 ♗xd4 30 ♖xd4 ♖c2+, or 24...♘c5 25 ♗xc5 ♖xc5 26 ♘d4 ♖fc8 27 f5 ♖e8.

24 ♖f2 ♖fc8 25 f5!

'At last the phalanx of white pawns begins advancing.' (Karpov)

25...♘xd4 26 ♘xd4 ♖xf2+ 27 ♔xf2



The evaluation of the position has clarified: White has an obvious advantage, but playing for a win is made difficult by the fact that there is little material left on the board.

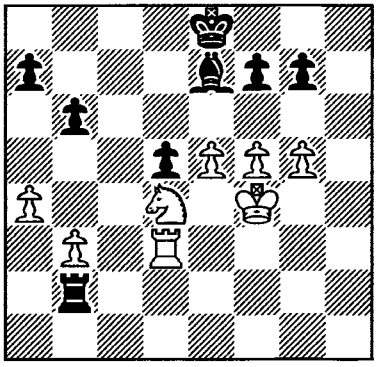
27...♖c1 (activating the rook is Black's only hope of saving the game) **28 g4 ♔f8 29 ♔f3 ♖f1+ 30 ♔g3 ♖c1**

Giving another check 30...♖g1+ might not have appealed to Sokolov because of 31 ♔f4! (31 ♔h3 ♖c1) 31...♖g2 (31...♖f1+ 32 ♘f3 Karpov) 32 ♘c6 ♖f2+ 33 ♔g3 ♗e1 34 ♔h3.

31 ♔f4 h6 32 h4 ♔e8 33 ♘f3 ♖c2 34 a4 ♖b2 35 ♘d4 ♗e7 36 h5

Karpov advanced this pawn after a long think, using up nearly all of his remaining time. He probably did not want to take any actions involving a reduction in the number of pawns and therefore demanding accurate calculation. But on this occasion was he not let down by his intuition?

This move was condemned by most of the commentators, who considered 36 g5 hxg5+ 37 hxg5 to be stronger. Let us continue the analysis with the moves 37...a6 (waiting and covering the b5-square) and 37...♖b1 (waiting and giving greater scope to the rook).



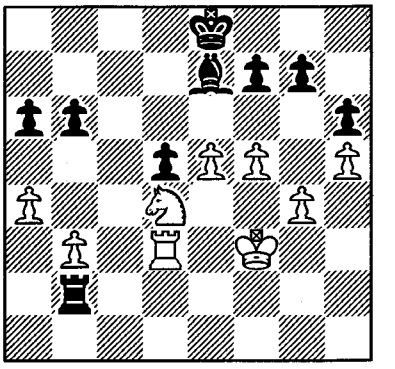
Analysis diagram

So, 37...a6 38 f6 gxf6 39 gxf6 ♗c5 40 ♘f3 ♗a3! (the best defence – an attack on the white pawns that have moved onto dark squares!) 41 ♔f5 ♖f2 42 e6 ♗b2! 43 b4 (after 43 e7 a5 White is unable to strengthen his position) 43...b5 44 axb5 axb5 45 e7 ♖f1 46 ♔g5 ♖f2 47 ♖b3 ♗c1+ 48 ♔f5 ♗b2 – the draw is obvious.

In the event of 37...♖b1 38 f6 (38 ♘f3 ♗c5 39 f6, intending 39...gxf6 40 exf6!, is parried by 39...g6! 40 ♘d2 ♖e1! 41 ♖xd5 ♗e3+ with a draw) 38...gxf6 39 gxf6 ♗c5 an analogous variation is possible: 40 ♘f3 a5! (40...♖b2 is dangerous: 41 ♔f5 ♖e2 42 ♖xd5 ♖e3 43 ♘g5 ♖xb3 44 ♘xf7!) 41 ♔f5 ♖f1 42 e6 ♗d4! 43 e7 ♗b2. Another resource – 40 ♘b5 – does not prevent Black from carrying out roughly the same idea: 40...♖f1+ 41 ♖f3 ♖e1 42 ♘c7+ ♔d7 43 ♘xd5 ♗d4 or 42 ♘xa7 ♔d7 43 ♘b5 ♗g1 44 ♖h3 ♖f1+ 45 ♔g4 ♔e6, and again the white pawns are vulnerable.

But this does not exhaust the analysis of 36 g5. It is possible that the 'logical' 38 f6 is a mistake, whereas the unexpected 38 g6 gives a different picture: 37...a6 38 g6!? fxg6 39 fxg6 ♖g2 40 ♘e6 ♖xg6 41 ♘c7+, or 37...♖b1 38 g6!? fxg6 39 fxg6 ♖g1 40 ♘b5. By giving up his g-pawn, White intends to regain the a- and d-pawns, after which Black can rely only on the restricted amount of material.

36...a6 37 ♔f3

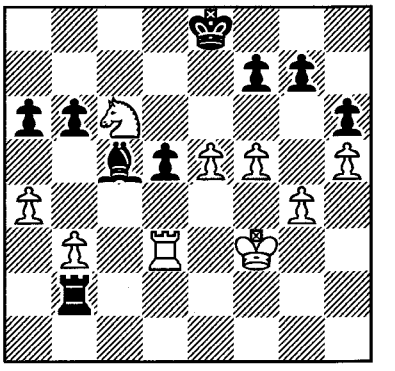


37...♗c5?

In time-trouble both players begin making mistakes. Control of the g5-square (and, as it turns out, of d8!) was important, and therefore Black should have manoeuvred with his rook – 37...♖h2. For example: 38 ♘c6 (38 ♔g3 ♖b2) 38...♖h3+ (after 38...♔d7 the pretty knight sacrifice 39 ♘b8+! ♔c7 40 ♘xa6+ ♔b7 41 ♖xd5 ♔xa6 42 ♖d7 ♗g5 43 ♖xf7 leads to a situation where the white pawns cannot be stopped) 39 ♔e2 ♖h2+ 40 ♔e3 ♖h3+ (not 40...♗c5+ 41 ♔f4 ♖f2+ 42 ♔g3 – this position is examined below) 41 ♔d2 ♖h2+ 42 ♔c3 ♖g2, and the result of the game is still unclear.

38 ♘e2?

Karpov does not venture 38 ♘c6! – with minimal forces White quite unexpectedly creates mating threats, which in combination with pawn breakthroughs promise a win!



Analysis diagram

Black has several possible replies:

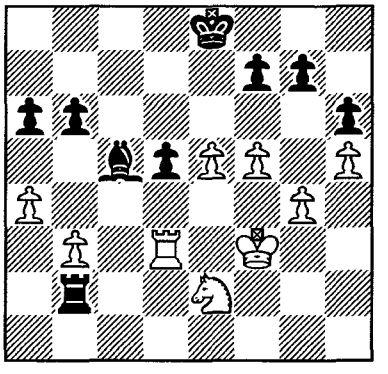
1) the passive defence 38...♖f2+ 39 ♔g3 ♖b2 is breached by 40 g5! hxg5 41 ♖xd5 ♖xb3+ 42 ♔g4 ♗e7 43 h6! gxh6 44 f6;

2) after 38...d4 39 g5! hxg5 40 b4! (White wants to exploit the same device: 40...♗xb4 41 ♖xd4 ♗e7 42 h6) 40...♗e7 41 h6 gxh6 42 ♖xd4 ♖b3+ 43 ♔e2 f6 44 e6 the e6-pawn costs Black his rook (44...♔f8 45 ♖d7 ♗xb4 46 ♖d8+ ♔g7 47 ♘xb4 ♖xb4 48 ♔d3 ♖b3+ 49 ♔d4 ♖b4+ 50 ♔d5 ♖f4 51 e7 ♖xf5+ 52 ♔d4 ♖e5 53 e8♕ ♖xe8 54 ♖xe8 h5 55 ♔e4, or 50...♖xa4 51 e7 ♖a5+ 52 ♔d6 ♖e5 53 e8♕ ♖xe8 54 ♖xe8 h5 55 ♔e6);

3) finally, 38...♗e7, in order if 39 b4 ♗xb4 40 g5 to exchange rooks by 40...♗e1 41 ♖xd5 ♖d2 42 ♖xd2 ♗xd2, also loses after 43 g6 – 43...b5 44 f6 ♔f8 45 axb5 axb5 46 e6 fxe6 47 f7, or 43...f6 44 exf6 gxf6 45 ♘d8 ♔f8 46 ♘e6+ ♔g8 47 ♘c7;

4) the last chance is to transpose into a rook endgame: 38...♖f2+ 39 ♔g3 ♖c2! 40 ♖xd5 (40 ♘b8 a5! 41 ♖xd5 ♖c3+ 42 ♔f4 ♖xb3 43 ♘c6 ♗e7 also reduces to a rook endgame, but in a worse version for White) 40...♗f2+ 41 ♔f3 ♖xc6 42 ♔xf2 ♖c3. Black regains the pawn but, as it turns out, only temporarily after 43 ♖d6! ♖xb3 44 f6! gxf6 45 ♖xf6 ♖b4 46 ♔f3, and he is unable to combat the passed pawns that White will soon create.

Since the time-trouble had not yet ended, it was now Sokolov's turn to make a mistake.

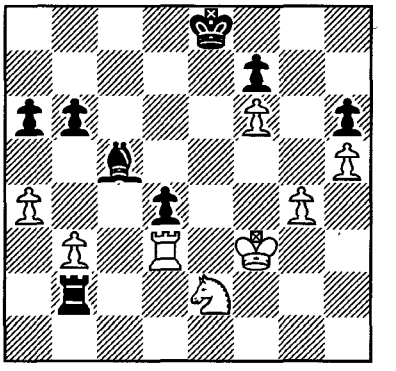


38...d4?!

This makes the defence much more difficult. After the waiting move 38...♖b1! the white rook is tied to the defence of the pawn, there are no mating threats against the black king, and the game is close to a draw: 39 ♘f4 ♖f1+ 40 ♔g3 ♖g1+ 41 ♘g2 ♖b1 42 ♘e3 ♗xe3 43 ♖xe3 ♔d7.

39 ♘f4

All in the same manner. As on the 36th move, Karpov avoids forcing events – 39 f6!? gxf6 40 exf6.



Analysis diagram

At first sight this continuation gives White good winning chances: 40...♖b1? 41 ♘g3 ♔d7 (41...♗d6 42 ♘f5 ♗e5 43 ♘xh6 ♗xf6 44 ♘f5 also leads to a difficult position) 42 g5! hxg5 43 h6 ♖b2 44 ♘f1 g4+ 45 ♔xg4 ♖e2 (45...♖g2+ 46 ♖g3 ♖e2 47 h7 ♖e8 48 ♔f5 ♖h8 49 ♖g7 is no better) 46 b4! ♗d6 (46...♗xb4 47 ♖xd4+ ♗d6 48 ♘g3) 47 ♖xd4, and Black can resign.

Hopes are offered only by the rook endgame after 40...♔d7! 41 ♘xd4 ♗xd4 42 ♖xd4+ ♔e6 43 ♖b4 ♔xf6 (or 43...b5!?, reducing the material remaining on the board: 44 axb5 axb5 45 ♖xb5 ♔xf6 46 b4 ♖b1) 44 ♖xb6+ ♔g5. By now continuing 45 a5, White obtains two connected passed pawns, but it would appear that Black is saved by a miracle in the form of 45...♖a2! 46 b4 ♖a4. To gain time, the rook stands as far away as possible from the white king, and after 47 ♔e4 ♔xg4

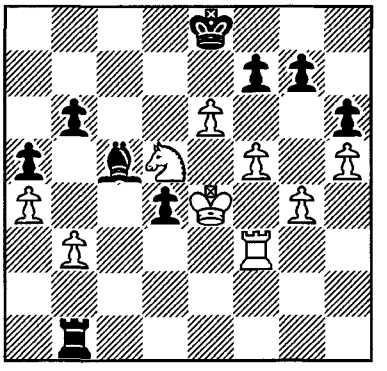
48 ♔d5 f5 49 ♔c5 ♔xh5 50 ♖xa6 f4 Black creates saving counterplay. For example: 51 ♖f6 ♔g5 52 ♖f8 h5 53 ♔b5 ♖a1 54 a6 (or 54 ♔a6 h4 55 b5 h3 56 ♖h8 ♔g4 57 b6 ♔g3 58 b7 ♖b1 – the draw is obvious) 54...♔g4! (not 54...h4 55 ♔b6 h3?? 56 a7 ♔g4 57 a8♕ ♖xa8 58 ♖xa8 h2 59 ♖a1 f3 60 ♔c5 and wins; the f-pawn is the more important queening candidate, and therefore it was not yet too late for 55...♔g4! 56 a7 f3 57 a8♕ ♖xa8 58 ♖xa8 f2, drawing) 55 ♔b6 f3 56 a7 ♔g3 57 a8♕ ♖xa8 58 ♖xa8 f2 with a draw.

Instead of 41 ♘xd4 White can, of course, try the same breakthrough as after 40...♖b1, namely: 41 g5 hxg5 42 h6. But here Black deals with the h6-pawn without losing material: 42...g4+ 43 ♔f2 ♖b1! (43...g3+? 44 ♔f3 g2 45 ♘g1 ♖b1 is bad in view of 46 ♔xg2, but not 46 h7? ♖xg1 47 h8♕ ♖h1, when it is White who has to save himself: 48 ♖xd4+! ♗xd4 49 ♕f8 with perpetual check) 44 ♘g3 ♖b2+ 45 ♔g1 ♖b1+ 46 ♘f1 ♖e1 etc.

39...♔d7 40 e6+ ♔e8 41 ♔e4 a5 42 ♖f3!

The sealed move, over which Karpov thought for nearly 20 minutes.

42...♖b1 43 ♘d5!



43...♖g1?

In his adjournment analysis Sokolov did not find a reliable method of defence, and he apparently went along to resume what he thought was a lost endgame. Karpov was of the same opinion. However, in fact the adjourned position was most probably drawn!

In *64* Igor Zaitsev disclosed the study-like way with which Karpov and his team (Zaitsev, Podgaets and Ubilava) were intending to conclude the game after 43...♔f8!, which is undoubtedly the best move. After a night-time and morning analysis they were planning 44 e7+! ♗xe7 45 ♔xd4 ♖g1 46 ♔c4! ♖xg4+ 47 ♔b5 ♗d8 48 ♖c3 ♖h4 49 ♔c6 ♖xh5 50 ♔d7 ♖xf5 51 ♘xb6! A pretty 'winning stroke'. Karpov: 'Since 51...♗xb6 leads to an amusing mate after 52 ♖c8+, Black is forced to give up the exchange – 51...♖f3, and after 52 ♖xf3 ♗xb6 the unavoidable b3-b4 breakthrough is decisive.'

But let's try sacrificing the bishop: 51...g5! 52 ♔xd8 g4 53 ♘c4 h5 – and isn't it now Black who is playing for a win here?!

Therefore, in my view, 48 ♔c6! is stronger: 48...♖h4 49 ♘xb6 ♗xb6 (49...♖xh5 50 ♘d7+ ♔g8 51 ♖e3) 50 ♔xb6 ♖xh5 51 ♔xa5, and White wins the pawn race: 51...g5 52 b4 g4 53 ♖f1 g3 54 b5 ♖xf5 55 ♖g1 ♖f3 (55...♖g5 56 ♔a6) 56 b6 ♖b3 57 ♔a6 h5 58 b7 h4 59 ♔a7 f5 60 a5 f4 61 a6 f3 (61...h3 62 ♔a8!) 62 ♔a8! f2 63 ♖c1 g2 64 a7 etc. But here 48...♖d4! is better: 49 ♘xb6 ♗e7 (49...♗xb6 50 ♔xb6 ♖d5 51 b4 axb4 52 a5), trying to control the b4-square.

This last variation suggests that the Karpov team's 'study' also has an earlier defect. Indeed, instead of 47...♗d8 it is more accurate to play the immediate 47...♖d4! 48 ♘xb6 ♗b4, and this blockade would appear to be impregnable.

44 ♔d3 ♖xg4?!

44...♔f8 45 ♖f4 ♖g3+ 46 ♔c4 d3 47 ♔c3 ♔e8, was somewhat more tenacious, although after 48 f6 or 48 e7! f6 49 ♖e4 ♗d6 50 ♔d2 White is close to a win.

45 f6!

The crux of White's plan. Black is not saved by either 45...fxe6 46 f7+ ♔d7 (46...♔f8 47 ♘c7) 47 ♘xb6+ ♔c6 48 ♘c4, or the 'tenacious' 45...♖g5 46 ♘c7+ ♔d8 47 e7+ ♗xe7 48 fxe7+ ♔xe7 (Karpov) 49 ♔xd4 ♖xh5 50 ♘d5+.

45...♗d6 46 ♘xb6 ♖g5 47 fxg7 ♖xg7 48 ♘c4 ♗b4 49 exf7+ ♖xf7 50 ♖xf7 ♔xf7 51 ♘e5+! ♔f6 52 ♘c6 ♗e1 53 ♘xd4 ♗b4 54 ♘c6 ♗e1 55 ♔e2 ♗c3 56 ♔d3 ♗e1 57 ♔c4 ♔g5 58 ♘xa5!

An elegant solution: the white pawns finish first by a big margin.

58...♗xa5 59 b4 ♗d8 60 a5 ♔xh5 61 ♔b5 ♗g5 62 a6 ♗e3 63 ♔c6 1-0

Black resigned, and the score became 6½-3½ in Karpov's favour.

In the 11th game after **1 e4 c6**, having despaired of gaining an advantage after 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 dxe4 4 ♘xe4 ♘d7 (3rd, 5th and 7th games) or 3 e5 ♗f5 4 ♘c3 e6 5 g4 ♗g6 6 ♘ge2 c5 (9th), Sokolov followed their starting duel – **2 c4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 cxd5 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 ♘xd5 6 ♘f3,** but Karpov, taking into account his opponent's condition, 'changed tune' – **6...♘xc3!? 7 bxc3 g6**. And... 'abandoning his unique competitive qualities as though they were no use, Sokolov replaced then with sheer passion. But in my opinion, to win against the 12th world champion by acting in this way is in principle impossible.' (Makarichev). After **8 h4?! ♗g7! 9 h5 ♘c6 10 ♖b1 ♕c7 11 ♗a3?! ♗f5 12 ♖b5 a6 13 ♖c5 ♕d7 14 ♕b3 0-0 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 ♗c4 ♗f6! 17 d4 b5! 18 ♗d5 ♘a5 19 ♕d1 ♘b7!** Black soon won the game, and with it the match: 7½-3½.

'Andrey possesses a memorable attacking style, he splendidly and accurately calculates complicated variations, and he is adept at handling a dynamic endgame. Yet for the moment his style cannot be called universal, since there are a number of technical and manoeuvring-type positions, where he does not feel so confident as in sharp and complicated situations,' wrote Igor Zaitsev in *64*. 'Our objective consisted in avoiding the latter type of position, and in obtaining the former. For the greater part Karpov was able to hold his opponent at a distance, though not always, it is true. In the 6th game there were some real fireworks. Given the slightest carelessness, something similar could also have begun in the 11th. But in the majority of cases, things did not come to a close-range fight... Karpov's play, his virtuoso technique and his ability to penetrate into the essence of the position, make a great impression.'

Both the score and the opening discussion were simply catastrophic for Sokolov: a complete rout! The great champion's flexible, infiltrating manner of play proved an unresolvable mystery for Andrey. Unfortunately, he was subsequently unable to learn fully the lessons from his match defeat and to correct his chess deficiencies. Gradually the results of this undoubtedly talented grandmaster declined, and within a few years Sokolov had dropped out of the world elite.

But Karpov emerged renewed from this match: there was both 1...c6, and consolidation of the positions with 1 d4. Whereas in the 1970s he used to play the same Spanish *tabiyas* for both colours with identical success, now the Queen's Indian with 4 g3 became 'Karpov territory', on which he felt more confident than anyone. It can safely be said that Karpov's many years of subsequent success can be tied in with the fact that here with Black he could always neutralise the opponent's advantage and, given the opportunity, launch a counterattack, while with White he was constantly seeking additional resources for developing that meagre advantage, which White usually enjoys in the Queen's Indian (an account of this is given later: *Game Nos.97-100*).

In our fourth match for the crown (Seville, October-December 1987) Karpov took the lead after I made a blunder during the resumption of the 23rd game, but then he cracked under the infernal tension of the concluding, 24th game. I managed to level the scores (12-12) and retain my title. Now our disputes were deferred – at last! – for three years, and Karpov had to begin the qualifying process from the Candidates quarter-final match.

Chasing two Birds

'Anatoly Karpov's fighting spirit is truly indomitable!' wrote the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* in 1988. 'Almost immediately after the match in Seville our illustrious grandmaster was victorious in Wijk aan Zee, he finished second in the Euwe Memorial (behind Short, whom he beat in their individual game), and finally he won the first stage of the World Cup and received the prize for the best game of the tournament!' The game in question was a win against Timman, then the third-rated player in the world – with White in a fashionable variation of the Queen's Gambit Accepted: 1 d4 d5 2 c4 dxc4 3 e4 ♘f6 4 e5 ♘d5 5 ♗xc4 ♘b6 6 ♗d3 (6 ♗b3 – *Game No.48)* 6...♘c6 7 ♘e2 ♗g4 8 ♗e3 etc.

I should remind you that in 1988-89, apart from the usual FIDE Candidates cycle, for the first time the World Cup was contested – this was effectively a tournament championship of the planet, organised by the Grandmasters Association (GMA). The two-year cycle consisted of six super-tournaments at classical time limits: Brussels – Belfort – Reykjavik – Barcelona – Rotterdam – Skelleftea. The 25 strongest grandmasters took part – each played in four of the six tournaments, and the three best results were taken into account. It need hardly be said how sharply the intensity of chess life increased, and what a fierce rivalry in the fight for this new prestigious trophy flared up between the 12th and 13th world champions!

I did not take part in the first World Cup tournament in April, but in May we met in a four-player match-tournament in Amsterdam (1. Kasparov – 9 out of 12; 2. Karpov – 6½; 3. Timman – 5½, etc.; my result against Karpov was +2=2), and in July – in the second stage of the World Cup in Belfort. Before our game in the penultimate round Karpov was two points behind me, but a successful novelty in the Grünfeld Defence, in the Zaitsev Variation, which was a subject of dispute between us in both Seville, and Amsterdam (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 cxd5 ♘xd5 5 e4 ♘xc3 6 bxc3 ♗g7 7 ♗c4 c5 8 ♘e2 ♘c6 9 ♗e3 0-0 10 0-0 ♗g4 11 f3 ♘a5 12 ♗xf7+!? ♖xf7 13 fxg4 ♖xf1+ 14 ♔xf1 ♕d6 etc.), enabled him to win and as a result to reduce the deficit: 1. Kasparov – 11½ out of 15; 2. Karpov – 10½, etc.

That same summer, into the tight schedule of super-tournaments was wedged the 55th USSR Championship (Moscow 1988), the strongest for a long time – the last in history which brought together the entire cream of Soviet chess. Here too there was a tough battle between Karpov and me for the title, although, of course, we also had other rivals. After eight rounds the leading group looked like this: Beliavsky and Salov – 5½; Karpov, Kasparov and Yusupov – 5. In the 9th round Salov defeated Beliavsky, while Karpov won a splendid game against Yusupov.

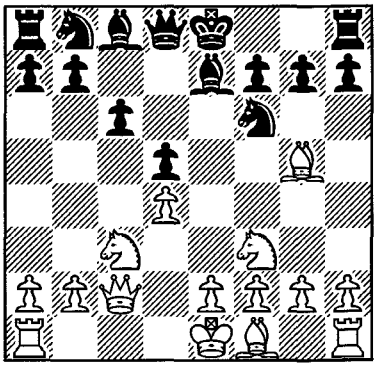
Game 92

A.Karpov-A.Yusupov

55th USSR Championship, Moscow 1988, 9th round

Queen's Gambit D36

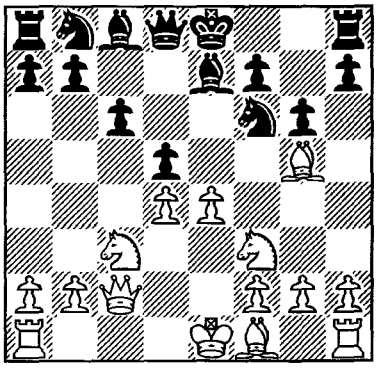
1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 ♗e7 4 ♘f3 ♘f6 5 cxd5 exd5 6 ♗g5 c6 7 ♕c2



Karpov is aiming for the classical Carlsbad set-up, which he usually played very successfully as White. But with this move order Black can immediately solve the problem of his c8-bishop's development.

7...g6 8 e4

Timman's plan, first employed by him against Short (Belgrade 1987). 8 e3 ♗f5, as occurred in the well-known game Bobotsov-Petrosian (*Volume 3, Game No.43*), is too insipid.



8...♘xe4?!

A new idea, which proves not altogether successful. The aforementioned Timman-Short game went 8...dxe4 9 ♗xf6 ♗xf6 10 ♕xe4+ ♔f8 11 ♗c4 ♔g7 12 0-0 ♖e8 13 ♕f4 ♗e6 14 ♗xe6 ♖xe6 15 ♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 16 ♖xe1 ♘d7 17 ♘e4 ♗e7 18 h4 with the initiative for White. But further experience showed that 15...♕d6 nevertheless maintains equality: 16 ♕xd6 ♖xd6 17 ♘e4 ♖d8 18 ♘xf6 ♔xf6 19 ♖e4 ♘a6 20 ♖ae1 ♖d7 21 ♘e5 ♖c7, and little-by-little White's activity is neutralised.

Instead of 10...♔f8 another way is also suitable: 10...♕e7 11 ♗c4 0-0 12 0-0 ♗f5 (12...♕b4 13 ♕f4 ♗f5 transposes) 13 ♕f4 ♕b4 14 ♘e5 (14 ♗b3 ♘d7 Ruban-Dreev, Tbilisi 1989) 14...♗xe5 15 dxe5 ♗e6 16 ♘e4 ♕xc4 17 ♖ac1 ♕b5 18 a4 ♕a5 19 ♘f6+ ♔g7 20 ♘h5+ with perpetual check (Gulko-Yusupov, Munich 1990).

The variation with 8 e4 gradually went out of use, but at that time it was very topical.

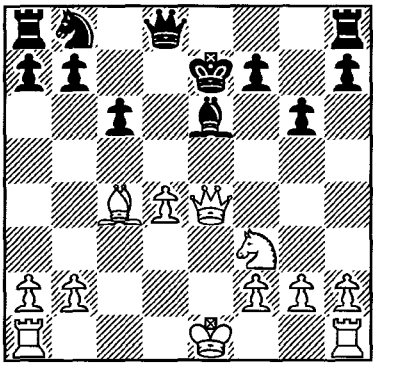
9 ♗xe7 ♔xe7

9...♕xe7? loses immediately to 10 ♘xd5! – this is the tactical basis of Timman's idea.

10 ♘xe4 dxe4 11 ♕xe4+ ♗e6

In the game Novikov-Brodsky (Erevan 1996) White held the initiative after 11...♔f8 12 ♗c4 ♗f5 13 ♕f4 ♕e7+ 14 ♔f1! ♔g7 15 ♘g5.

12 ♗c4



12...♕a5+

The other defensive possibility is 12...♖e8 13 ♗xe6 ♔f8, for example: 14 0-0 ♖xe6 15 ♕f4 ♔g7 16 ♖fe1 ♖xe1+ 17 ♖xe1 ♘d7. Zilberman-Polajzer (Bled 1989) continued 18 ♕d6 (this position would also have been obtained by Timman, if instead of 18 h4 he had played 18 ♘d6 ♗xd6 19 ♕xd6) 18...♘f6 19 ♕e7 ♕d7 and here by 20 ♘g5 ♖e8 21 ♘e6+ ♔g8 22 ♕xf6 ♖xe6 23 ♖xe6 White could have given his opponent a choice between two inferior endings – queen (23...fxe6) and pawn (23...♕xe6 24 ♕xe6 fxe6 25 f4 – it is not clear whether Black has a draw). However, after 15...♕f6 there is no way for White to strengthen his position significantly: 16 ♕h6+ ♕g7 17 ♕h4 ♘d7, or 16 ♕g3 ♔g7 17 ♖ae1 ♘a6.

Of course, in these variations there are some dangers for Black, but nevertheless fewer than in the event of the quiet 13 ♕h4+ ♔f8 14 ♕xd8 ♖xd8 15 ♗xe6 fxe6 16 0-0-0. The e6-pawn is weak, and after the approximate 16...♖d6 17 ♘g5 h6 18 ♘e4 ♖d7 19 ♘c5 ♖e7 20 ♖he1 the situation becomes extremely unpleasant for him.

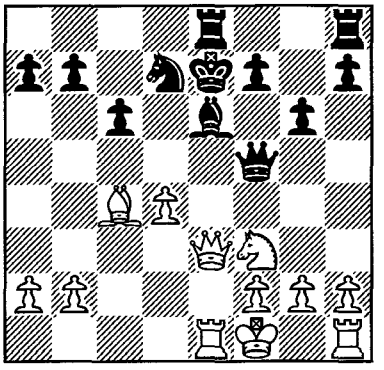
13 ♔f1! ♕f5 14 ♕e3

The endgame with a weak pawn at e6 (after 14 ♖e1 – this was probably the best choice) is

good for White, although not as favourable as in the variation with 12...♖e8. But Karpov reckons that – with the king at e7! – things will be more difficult for Black with the queens on.

14...♘d7 (if 14...♘a6?!, intending ...♘c7, then 15 d5! cxd5 16 ♕a3+ ♔f6 17 ♗xa6 bxa6 18 ♕c3+ ♔e7 19 ♘d4 is strong) **15 ♖e1 ♖ae8**

Black is obviously preparing to evacuate his king to the queenside, and White decides to make a breakthrough.



16 d5!

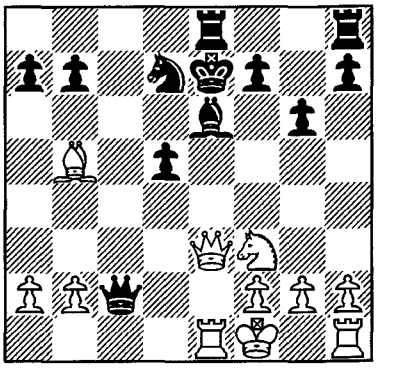
Karpov spent more than 40 minutes considering this sacrifice. He thought that this was the critical moment of the game: 'White obviously has numerous tactical possibilities, but I was unable to unite them in a logical chain of moves. It was clear to me that for the development of the initiative I had to sacrifice my central pawn, but what next? And suddenly the realisation came to me: the weak dark squares in Black's position are defended by his knight. And then I immediately found a manoeuvre, the aim of which was to eliminate this knight.'

Nothing was given by the direct 16 ♗xe6 fxe6 17 ♕a3+ on account of 17...♔d8! (17...♔f6 involves a transparent trap – 18 ♕xa7?? ♕b5+ 19 ♔g1 ♖a8, but after 18 ♔g1 a6 19 h4 Black's position is unenviable) 18 ♕xa7 ♔c7 19 ♕a3 ♖a8 20 ♕c3 ♕b5+ 21 ♔g1 ♖xa2 22 b3 ♕d5 23 h4 ♖f8 24 ♖h3 ♖f5 25 ♖g3 ♘f6. Another tempting move – 16 ♘g5 would also have allowed Black to regain his pawn after 16...♔d8! 17 ♘xe6+ fxe6 18 ♗xe6 ♕b5+ 19 ♖e2 ♖hf8 20 ♕b3 ♖f4 21 ♕xb5 cxb5 22 d5 ♖d4 23 g3 ♘c5 with a probable draw.

16...cxd5 17 ♗b5 (17 ♘d4 ♕e5!) **17...a6?**

The decisive mistake. Karpov recommends 17...d4, but this too would have lost by force: 18 ♘xd4 ♕d5 19 ♖d1 ♕h5 20 ♗e2 ♕e5 21 ♕a3+ ♔f6 22 ♘xe6 ♖xe6 23 ♕f3+ ♔e7 24 ♗c4 ♖f6 25 ♕xb7 etc.

Meanwhile, no one noticed the cool-headed 17...♕c2! This is not simply an attack on the b2-pawn, but also a significant change in the queen's role in the forthcoming struggle (in the game it was driven back to the pitiful square h6).



Analysis diagram

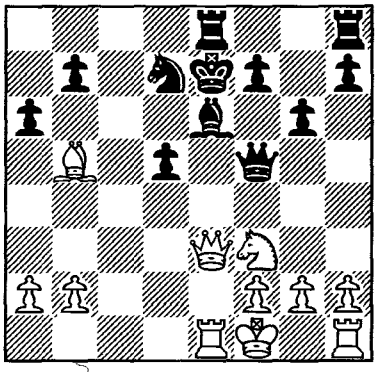
It is not at all obvious how White can exploit the 'indecent' position of Black's king and his other pieces. After all, White's king is also separating his rooks and hindering the reserves from coming into play:

1) 18 b4 a6 19 ♗xd7 ♔xd7 20 ♘e5+ ♔e7 21 h4 d4!? 22 ♕xd4 ♖d8 23 ♕e3 ♖d1, and Black has seized the initiative;

2) 18 ♘d4 ♕xb2 19 a4 ♔f6 20 ♕f4+, and 20...♔g7? 21 ♘xe6+ ♖xe6 22 ♖xe6 fxe6 23 ♗xd7 (23...♕b1+ 24 ♔e2 ♕xh1? 25 ♕e5+) is bad for Black, but 20...♗f5 21 ♘xf5 ♖xe1+ 22 ♔xe1 gxf5 is possible – White has nothing

better than perpetual check.

We have seen many times how verification with a computer can make corrections to the evaluation of even the seemingly most impeccable games.



18 ♕a3+

With a series of precise geometric manoeuvres, Karpov drives the black pieces into a situation of complete stalemate.

18...♔d8 19 ♕a5+! ♔e7

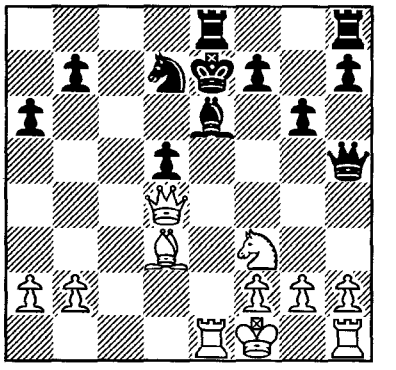
It is not possible to run to the queenside: 19...♔c8 20 ♖c1+ ♔b8 21 ♕c7+ ♔a8 22 ♘d4, and Black is forced to give up the exchange – 22...♕e5 23 ♕xe5 ♘xe5 24 ♗xe8, since 22...♕f6 23 ♗xa6! (after 23 ♗c6 ♖b8 24 ♘xe6 bxc6 25 ♕xc6+ ♖b7 26 ♕xa6+ ♔b8 27 ♕d6+ ♔a8 it unexpectedly transpires that 28 ♘c7+ ♔b8 29 ♕xd7 ♖xb2! 30 f3 ♕b6 31 ♖c5 ♖c8 gives only a draw; 28 ♕a3+ ♔b8 29 ♖c6 is better, but here too after 29...fxe6 30 ♕d6+ ♔a8 31 ♖a6+ ♖a7 32 ♖xa7+ ♔xa7 33 ♕xd7+ ♔b6 it is not easy to indicate a clear way for White to gain an advantage) 23...♖b8 24 ♖c3! (not Karpov's move 24 ♕a5 on account of 24...♖bc8!, but not 24...♕xd4?? 25 ♗xb7) 24...♕xd4 (24...bxa6 25 ♕c6+ ♔a7 26 ♖a3 etc.) 25 ♗e2 leads to the loss of the queen.

20 ♕b4+ ♔f6

If 20...♔d8, then 21 ♗e2 is good, as well as Zaitsev's very spectacular recommendation 21 ♘d4 ♕f6 22 ♗xa6! bxa6 23 ♖c1! ♖eg8 24 ♖c6! – Black is helpless.

21 ♕d4+ ♔e7 22 ♗d3 ♕h5

After 22...♕f6 23 ♕b4+ White picks up the queenside pawns, and the black king is still in the danger zone.



23 h4! (the queen is pinned to the edge of the board!) **23...♔d8 24 ♘g5 ♖hf8 25 ♗e2** (25 f3 and ♔f2, connecting the rooks, was also good) **25...♕h6 26 ♗f3 ♖e7 27 ♕b4! ♘f6 28 ♕d6+**

28 ♕f4 (Karpov) would have won immediately, but in any case Black has no defence.

28...♖d7 29 ♕f4 ♘g8 30 ♗g4! ♔c8 31 ♗xe6 fxe6 32 ♖c1+ ♔d8 33 ♘xe6+ ♔e7 34 ♕xf8+ ♕xf8 35 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 36 ♖h3 ♘e7 37 h5 ♔g7 38 h6+ ♔f6 39 ♖f3+ ♔e6 40 ♖e1+ ♔d6 41 ♖f6+ ♔c7 42 g4 ♘c6 43 ♖e8 d4 1-0

This last move was sealed. Without resuming, Black resigned.

In the 14th round I beat Salov and for two days broke ahead, but in the 16th round Karpov cleanly outplayed Malaniuk in the Leningrad Variation of the Dutch Defence, and we arrived at the finish together: 1-2. Kasparov and Karpov – 11½ out of 17 (+6=11); 3-4. Yusupov and Salov – 10, etc. The regulations stipulated an additional match of four games for the title of USSR Champion, but Karpov did not want to play it, and the Sports Committee officials together with his arbiter colleagues went along with him. As a result, champion's medals were awarded to us both

(this is described in more detail in Volume 2, in the chapter about Botvinnik).

In September in excellent style Karpov won a six-player super-tournament in Tilburg, on this occasion a double-round event – 10½ out of 14 (+7=7), in which he finished two points ahead of Short and twice beat Timman. In November I fought alongside him for the Soviet team at the Olympiad in Thessaloniki, and we scored +7=3 and +6=4 respectively (1. USSR – 40½ out of 56; 2-3. England and Holland – 34½, etc.).

Then with considerable difficulty I won the third stage of the World Cup (Reykjavik, October 1988), and in the fourth (Barcelona, spring 1989) I shared 1st-2nd places with Ljubojevic (but he came first on the tie-break). Karpov did not take part in these tournaments, but he had not lost hope of winning the World Cup. In passing he shared victory in the rapidplay championships of Europe and the world, staged by FIDE (1988), and early in 1989 in Seattle he won a short quarter-final Candidates match against Hjartarson (3½-1½) and finished second behind Ivanchuk in Linares.

The fifth stage of the World Cup (Rotterdam, June 1989) became probably the most dramatic tournament in Karpov's chess biography. In order to catch up with me before the concluding battle in Skelleftea, he had to take 1st place, at the same time scoring at least 11 out of 15 against the best grandmasters. And the ex-world champion started with 5 out of 6, and later had 9½ out of 12! He only needed to make three draws, but... his strength ran out. He suffered three defeats in a row – against Salov, Ljubojevic and Nunn – and conceded 1st place to Timman! At the closing ceremony the happy Dutchman called this result the best in his career.

In the sixth tournament (Skelleftea, August-September 1989) Karpov could still have achieved overall success, if he had taken clear 1st place, scored 11 out of 15 (again!) and finished a point ahead of me. We met as early as the 2nd round, and I completely outplayed him with Black in a King's Indian Defence, but missed a win in my opponent's severe time-trouble. Nikitin: 'This draw did both players a disservice.' Even so we finished joint first, each scoring 9½ out of 15.

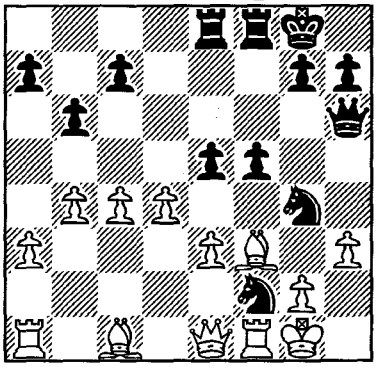
Our lead in points over the other contestants in the World Cup comprised almost a whole tournament: 1. Kasparov – 83 points; 2. Karpov – 81; 3. Salov – 68½; 4. Ehlvest – 68; 5. Ljubojevic – 66½; 6. Nunn – 65½; 7-8. Beliavsky and Short – 63½; 9-10. Hübner and Timman – 57½; 11. A.Sokolov – 57, etc. A summing-up of this unprecedented two-year race was given on the pages of the magazine *Shakhmaty v SSSR* by Alexander Nikitin:

'In this cycle it would seem that the generation of the Fischer era made its farewell. Against their young colleagues it has become hard for the brilliant aces to compete – Korchnoi, Tal, Portisch, Spassky, but they performed quite worthily... It is doubtful whether they will all pass through the Swiss sieve, the almost lottery-like qualifier for the next World Cup – the years take their toll. And it can be expected that within a year a new generation will appear to compete with the Karpov generation and the Kasparov generation. The brightest and most prepared for such a competition, in my view, are Ivanchuk, Lautier, Gelfand, Dreev, Anand and Akopian.'

In all these experiences, the most important one for Karpov was his Candidates semi-final match with Artur Yusupov (London, October 1989). Its outcome seemed predictable: Yusupov always found it hard playing against Karpov, and it was not clear how he would be able to change this tradition. But the match turned out to be very difficult for the ex-champion. As is apparent, what told was fatigue after the battles of the World Cup, and also the fact that Yusupov and his trainer, Mark Dvoretsky, did not stake too much on the World Cup tournaments, and managed to prepare well for the main test and to choose a reliable opening course.

Following the fashion of those years, the match was the best of just eight games, with a new, six-hour time control: 40 moves in two moves, plus 20 in the next hour, and only then adjournment. Apart from Igor Zaitsev and Mikhail Podgaets, Karpov was helped by the American grandmaster Ron Henley – also a sign of the times!

In the 1st game Karpov with Black employed a strong novelty in the Queen's Indian Defence with 4 g3 ♗a6 and obtained a comfortable game – a draw on the 44th move. In the 2nd, after choosing the 4 ♕c2 variation against the Nimzo-Indian Defence, he unexpectedly came under a powerful attack, but at the decisive moment Yusupov delayed.



23...e4?

The general opinion was that 23...♘d3! would have given Black every chance of winning. If 24 ♕c3?!, then 24...e4! is now good (25 hxg4 fxg4 and wins). 24 ♗d5+ ♔h8 25 e4 does not help in view of 25...♘xc1 26 hxg4 (26 ♕xc1 ♘e3) 26...♘d3 27 ♕g3 ♘f4 28 ♖ae1 fxg4 and wins. If 24 ♕g3, then 24...♘xc1 25 hxg4 (25 ♗xg4 ♘b3) 25...♕xe3+ etc. And after 24 ♕e2 ♘xc1 25 ♖fxc1 ♘xe3 26 dxe5 ♖xe5 Black has an extra pawn and the initiative.

24 ♗d1! (avoiding the unclear variations with 24 hxg4 ♘d3 or 24...fxg4 25 ♕xf2 gxf3)

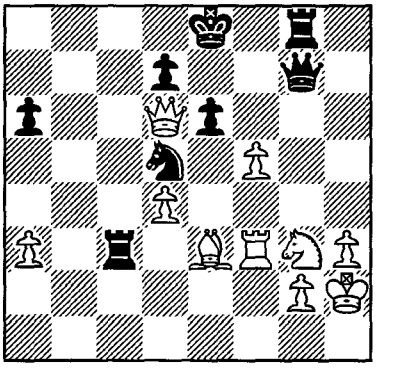
24...♘xd1

24...♘xh3+? 25 gxh3 ♕xh3 did not work on account of 26 ♖a2! But now the chances are equal.

25 ♕xd1 ♘xe3 26 ♕e2 f4 27 ♗xe3 fxe3 28 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 29 ♖e1 ♖d8 30 d5 c6 31 dxc6 ♕xc6 32 ♕xe3 ♕xc4 33 ♕xe4 ½-½

In the 3rd game it was Karpov's turn to employ the Nimzo-Indian Defence. In reply Yusupov chose the sharp Sämisch Variation and boldly sacrificed the exchange. The ex-champion played very strongly, and seized the initiative, but in a fierce time scramble genuine miracles began.

Game 93
A.Yusupov-A.Karpov
Candidates Match,
London 1989, 3rd game



36...♕e7?

There was a pretty win by 36...♖xe3! 37 f6 (37 fxe6 ♖xf3) 37...♕xg3+! or 37 ♕b8+ ♔f7! 38 fxe6+ ♔xe6 39 ♖xe3+ ♘xe3 40 ♕b3+ ♘d5 (Zaitsev).

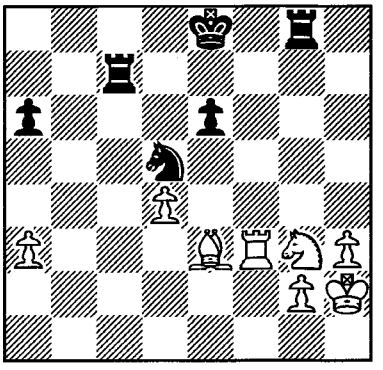
37 ♕b8+ ♕d8 38 ♕e5 ♕c7? (38...♕f6 with a draw) **39 ♕xc7?**

But now it is White who misses a win – 39 f6! ♖f8 40 f7+ ♔d8 41 ♕g7 (Dvoretsky), or 39...♕xe5 40 f7+ ♔f8 41 fxg8♕+ ♔xg8 42 dxe5 ♖xe3 43 ♖xe3 ♘xe3 44 ♘e4 ♘c4 45 ♘f6+ ♔f7 46 ♘xd7 ♘xa3 47 ♔g3! etc.

39...♖xc7 40 fxe6 dxe6

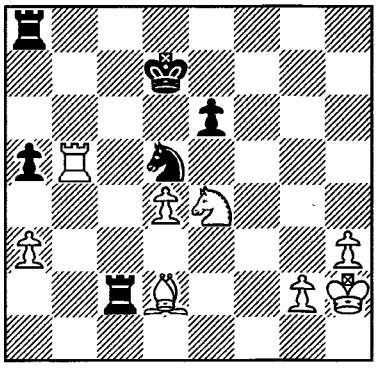
But not 40...♖c3 (Taimanov) 41 ♘e4! and

wins. A complicated, non-standard ending has arisen. The time control had passed, and whereas in former times the game would have been adjourned, now, by the new rules, play continued until move 60.



41 ♘e4 ♖c2 42 ♗d2 a5 43 ♖b3 ♔d7 44 ♖b5 ♖a8?!

'A very strange move, made by Karpov after a long think. During the game Yusupov considered the best winning attempt to be 44...♘e3!, although after 45 ♘f6+ ♔c6 46 ♖c5+ ♖xc5 47 ♘xg8 ♘f1+ 48 ♔g1 ♖c2 49 ♗f4 White should be able to hold the position.' (Dvoretsky)



45 a4 ♔c6 (45...♖c4 was equal – Taimanov) **46 h4! ♖c4?! 47 ♖c5+ ♖xc5 48 dxc5 ♘b4**

Intending ...♔d5, but now the advantage is on the side of White; his passed g- and h-pawns begin advancing.

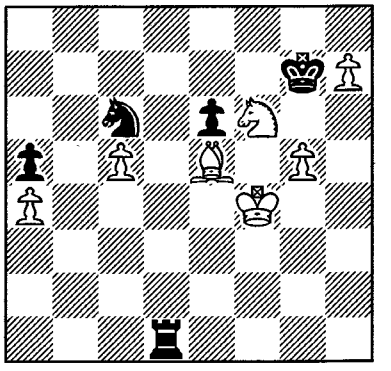
49 h5

'49 g4! ♔d5 50 ♘f6+ was more accurate, when Black would have had to play 50...♔xc5, retaining chances of a draw.' (Dvoretsky)

49...♔d5 50 ♘f6+ ♔e5

After 50...♔xc5 51 g4 the king is too far away from the dangerous white pawns. But now too Black has to fight for his survival.

51 ♗c3+ ♔f4 52 g4 ♖d8! 53 h6 ♔g5 54 h7 ♔g6 55 ♔g3 ♘c6 56 ♔f4 ♔g7 57 g5?! (a severe time scramble again interferes; 57 ♔e3! was better) **57...♖d3 58 ♗e5 ♖d1**



59 g6?? (a nightmarish blunder with the flag about to fall; 59 ♗d6 ♖h1 would have led to a draw) **59...♖f1+ 60 ♔g5 ♘xe5 61 ♘h5+ 0-1**

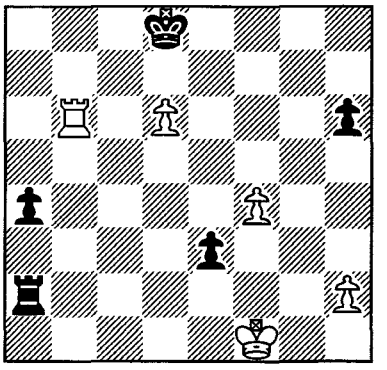
This move was sealed, but White resigned without resuming.

After taking the lead, Karpov avoided the Nimzo-Indian Defence in the 4th game by playing 3 ♘f3, but instead of a Queen's Indian Defence Yusupov preferred to go into a Queen's Gambit, where he chose not the then popular Makogonov-Bondarevsky Variation, but the old Lasker Defence. Karpov played uncertainly and conceded the initiative, but it all ended happily for him.

In the 5th game, after playing poorly in a Queen's Pawn Opening, Karpov almost managed to equalise, but in a time scramble Yusupov suddenly made a bold positional sacrifice of a bishop and gained a pretty win. This

game was awarded a prize for the best in the two semi-final matches (which were played, incidentally, on the same stage; in the second match Timman defeated Speelman 4½-3½).

After levelling the scores, Yusupov could have built on his success in the 6th game, which proved truly tragic for him. Again the Lasker Defence was played, and again Black seized the initiative, but at the very last moment he missed a certain win.



38...a3?

38...♖xh2 would have won easily, for example: 39 f5 ♖f2+ 40 ♔e1 ♖xf5, or 39 ♖a6 ♖f2+ 40 ♔e1 ♖xf4.

39 ♖a6! ♖f2+ 40 ♔e1 a2 41 f5 ♔d7 (or 41...♖xh2 42 f6! etc.) **42 f6 ♔e6 43 ♖a8! ♔xd6 44 f7 ♖xf7 45 ♖xa2 ♔c5 46 ♖a6 ½-½**

When after the match Dvoretsky was asked: 'How do you explain that Yusupov more than once missed a win that seemed altogether close?' the experienced trainer replied:

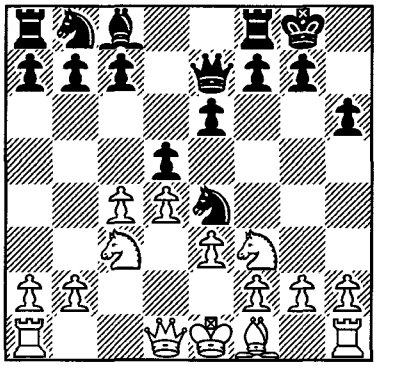
'A suspicious person would have attributed this to "Dr Zukhar", the role of whom at this match was performed by Igor Akimov, a psychologist and at the same time a journalist, an old helper of Karpov *(and the literary editor of his book 'Sestra moya Kaissa' – G.K.)*. Throughout all the games Akimov sat in the front row of the balcony and stared incessantly at the players, i.e. he behaved as Zukhar once did in Baguio. The normal explanation is simpler: Yusupov expends too much effort on a game, becomes tired and at the decisive moment it can happen that he no longer sees anything. This deficiency of his also told earlier.'

In the 7th game a Queen's Pawn Opening again occurred. On this occasion Karpov successfully solved his problems, but on the 24th and 25th moves he played inaccurately, and White seized the initiative. In the already customary time scramble he won a pawn, but a position with opposite-coloured bishops was reached. A draw was agreed on the 61st move – and the score became 3½-3½.

And then, finally, came the 8th game – the last in 'normal time'.

Game 94
A.Karpov-A.Yusupov
Candidates Match,
London 1989, 8th game
Queen's Gambit D56

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 d5 4 ♘c3 ♗e7 5 ♗g5 0-0 6 e3 h6 7 ♗h4 ♘e4 8 ♗xe7 ♕xe7



9 ♖c1

On encountering the Lasker Defence for the third time, the ex-champion again makes a different choice. In the 4th game he played 9 ♕c2, and in the 6th – 9 cxd5.

9...c6 10 ♗d3 ♘xc3 11 ♖xc3 dxc4 12 ♗xc4 ♘d7 13 0-0 e5

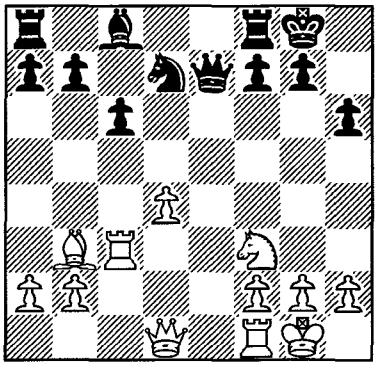
A position from the Capablanca Variation has been reached (6...♘bd7 7 ♖c1 c6 8 ♗d3 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 ♘d5 10 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 11 0-0 ♘xc3 12 ♖xc3 e5), but with the pawn on h6. This is not simply an extra tempo, but also a weakening of the castled position, and for White this gives the chance of an attack!

The alternative is 13...b6 14 ♗d3 c5. I played this against Smyslov in the 6th game of the final Candidates match (1984) and after 15 ♗b5 ♖d8 I maintained the balance. Later 15 ♗e4 ♖b8 16 ♕c2 or 16 ♕a4, which maintain slight pressure, were considered more promising, as, for example, in the games Kramnik-Kasparov (Las Palmas 1996) and Karpov-Yusupov (Dortmund 1997).

14 ♗b3 exd4

14...♖e8, maintaining the pawn tension in the centre, is also quite safe. After 15 d5 cxd5 16 ♕xd5 ♘f6 several games, beginning with Nikolic-Yusupov (Belgrade 1989), reached one and the same position – 17 ♕c5 ♘e4 18 ♕xe7 ♖xe7 19 ♖c2 ♘g5 – and invariably ended in a draw.

15 exd4



15...♘f6?!

A serious inaccuracy. 15...♖d8 was correct, as, for example, in the recent game Leitao-Morovic (Brazil 2003). By playing his knight to f8 and erecting in good time a screen at e6, Black safely neutralises the bishop at b3, which otherwise makes the black king very uncomfortable: 16 ♖e1 ♕d6 17 ♖ce3 ♘f8 18 ♘e5 ♗e6 19 ♕h5 ♗xb3 20 ♖xb3 ♕c7, and Morovic succeeded in defending everything.

16 ♖e1 ♕d6 17 ♘e5 ♘d5

17...♗f5?, as Benjamin played against me (Horgen 1994), is refuted by 18 ♘xf7! I didn't play this, overlooking that after 18...♖xf7 19 ♗xf7+ ♔xf7 20 ♕b3+ ♔f8 21 ♕xb7 ♖b8 22 ♕xa7 ♖xb2 White wins by 23 ♖xc6! ♕xc6 24 ♕a3+ etc.

It was quite possible to radically eliminate the threats to the f7-point by 17...♗e6 18 ♗xe6 fxe6, although the isolated e6- and d4-pawns are not equivalent, and White's position should be preferred – say, after 18 ♖g3 (Makarichev).

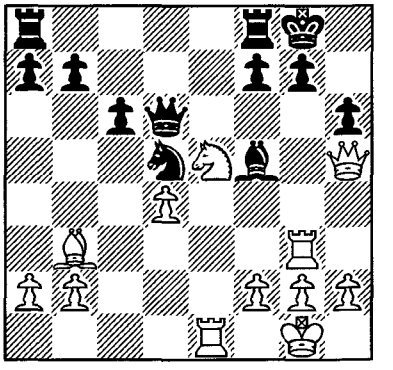
18 ♖g3

Now it has become apparent that the h6-pawn, while safeguarding the king against mate threats on the back rank, has itself been transformed into a target for attack.

18...♗f5

A questionable decision. 18...♗e6 19 ♕d2 ♔h8 was probably better. The rook manoeuvre 20 ♖e4 ♗f5 21 ♖h4 does not give anything serious: 21...♖ae8 (21...♗h7? 22 ♖hg4 g5 23 ♗xd5 ♕xd5 24 ♖xg5! and wins), and after 22 ♖f3 ♗g6 23 ♗xd5 cxd5 (23...♕xd5? 24 ♖xh6+) White has to be satisfied merely with the greater activity of his pieces.

19 ♕h5



19...♗h7?

A serious mistake, after which it is already difficult to save the game. 19...♕e6! was nec-

essary, although such a move (into the line of fire of the bishop at b3 and rook at e1) is hard to make. However, there is no direct refutation. In the event of 20 ♗xd5 cxd5 21 ♘d3 ♕f6 22 ♖f3 Black has a choice: either 22...g6 23 ♕xh6 ♕xd4 24 ♖xf5 ♕xd3 25 ♖fe5 ♕d4 26 h4 ♖ac8 27 ♖1e2 with the initiative for White in the heavy piece ending, or 22...♗g6 23 ♖xf6 ♗xh5 24 ♖d6 ♗g6 25 ♘f4 ♖fe8! – in this endgame it is hard for White to exploit his advantage.

20 ♕g4! g5?

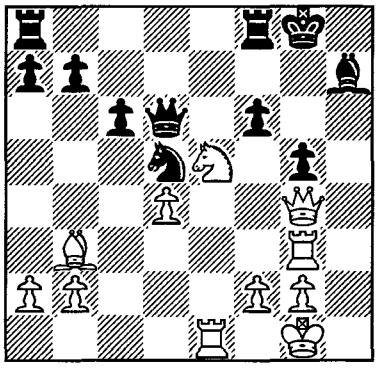
Of course, 20...g6 21 h4 (Karpov) does not look very appealing, but now Black loses by force.

21 h4 f6 22 hxg5!

The position is ripe for a decisive assault, and White only needs to choose the correct way. The dashing 22 ♕h5 fxe5 23 hxg5 ♔g7 24 ♗xd5 cxd5 25 ♖xe5 was recommended by some commentators, with an attack, but after 23...♗g6 24 ♕xh6 e4! 25 ♖xe4 ♖f7 White is in danger of coming to a standstill.

22...hxg5

'In the event of 22...fxg5 the reply 23 f4! would have only gained in strength.' (Karpov)



23 f4?!

Here, in my view, Karpov missed a forced win – 23 ♖h3! This move was suggested along with 23 ♕h5 and 23 ♘f3 'with interesting variations'. Today they are interesting perhaps only for the fact that the computer refutes the human. For example, after 23 ♘f3 ♔h8 24 ♖e6 ♕d7 25 ♘xg5 ♖g8 the correct continuation is not 26 ♖xf6? (Zaitsev) 26...♕xg4 27 ♖xg4 ♖xg5!, when Black wins, but 26 ♖xc6! ♕xg4 27 ♘f7+, and also in the variation 25...fxg5 26 ♕xg5 ♖g8 27 ♕e5+ ♖g7 28 ♖h6 ♕e7 29 ♖xg7 ♕xg7 30 ♗c2 Zaitsev overlooks a computer defence – 30...♘f6!

But all these are secondary details, since 23 ♖h3! would have given White a decisive advantage:

1) 23...fxe5 24 ♖xh7! ♕f6. In Karpov's opinion, 'thanks to this move Black holds on' (in contrast to 24...♔xh7 25 ♗c2+), but this is not so – after 25 ♖xe5 ♕xf2+ 26 ♔h2 ♕f4+ 27 ♕xf4 and ♖xb7 it is time for him to resign;

2) 23...♕e7 24 ♖ee3! fxe5 25 ♖xe5 ♕f7 26 ♕xg5+ ♕g7 27 ♖xd5! cxd5 28 ♕xd5+ ♔h8 29 ♗c2 ♖ad8 30 ♖xh7+! (spectacular, although it is also possible simply to move the queen) 30...♕xh7 31 ♕e5+ ♕g7 32 ♕h5+ ♔g8 33 ♗b3+ ♖f7 34 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 (34...♕xf7 35 ♕g5+) 35 ♕c5+ ♔xf7 36 ♕c7+. This computer geometry demonstrates that Black is defenceless.

23...♖ae8?!

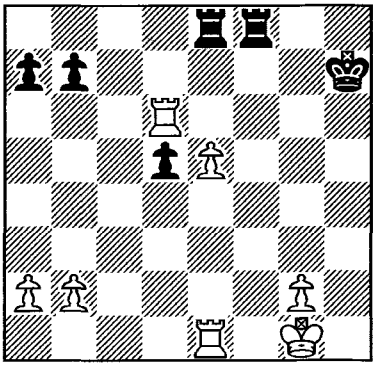
Yusupov misses the chance opportunity and takes play into a lost endgame. 23...♔h8 was recommended, in order to obtain a more favourable version of this endgame: 24 fxg5 fxe5 25 g6 ♕xg6 26 ♕xg6 ♗xg6 27 ♖xg6 exd4. After this Zaitsev gave an interesting variation with zugzwang in the final position: 28 ♖e4 ♖f7 29 ♗xd5 cxd5 30 ♖h4+ ♖h7 31 ♖xd4 ♖d8 32 ♖g5 ♖hd7 33 a3 a6 34 a4 b5 *(? – G.K.)* 35 axb5 axb5 36 b4 and wins (this variation was also given later by Karpov), but after 34...a5 it is unclear whether White has a win.

In my opinion, 24 ♗xd5! cxd5 (24...♕xd5 25 fxg5! fxe5 26 g6) 25 ♘d3 is much stronger, when it is hard for Black to defend, for example: 25...♖ae8 26 ♖xe8 ♖xe8 27 fxg5 ♖g8 28 ♖h3 or 25...♖g8 26 ♖e6 ♕d7 27 f5 etc. Even so, 23...♔h8 would have given better chances of resisting.

24 fxg5 fxe5

If 24...♗f5 Karpov was planning a spec-

tacular queen sacrifice: 25 gxf6+!! ♗xg4 26 ♖xg4+ ♔h8 27 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 28 ♖xe8+ ♖f8 29 f7! ♘f6 30 ♖xf8+ ♕xf8 31 ♖g8+, transposing into an easily won pawn endgame. And if 29...♔h7, then 30 ♗c2+ ♔h6 31 ♖g6+ ♕xg6 32 ♗xg6 ♔g7! 33 g3! (Makarichev) is decisive. **25 g6 ♗xg6 26 dxe5!** (an important interposition, enabling the extra pawn to be retained) **26...♕e6 27 ♗xd5 cxd5 28 ♕xg6+ ♕xg6 29 ♖xg6+ ♔h7 30 ♖d6**



The resulting rook endgame merely demands of White a certain technical accuracy. **30...♖c8** (30...♖d8 31 ♖d1!) **31 ♖e3 ♖c2 32 ♖d7+ ♔g6 33 ♖xb7 ♖e8** (33...♖ff2? 34 ♖g3+ ♔h6 35 ♖b8 ♔h7 36 ♖b4! Taimanov) **34 a3 d4 35 ♖d3 ♖xe5 36 ♖xd4 ♖g5**

36...♖ee2 37 ♖g4+ ♔f5 was slightly more tenacious, but even here there are no saving chances: 38 ♖gg7 ♖xb2 39 ♖xb2 ♖xb2 40 ♖xa7.

Not all of the subsequent moves should have been made, but Yusupov was apparently in a state of shock: this match which had gone so well was lost by him practically without a fight in the final game.

37 ♖d6+ ♔h5 38 ♖h7+ ♔g4 39 ♖d4+ ♔f5 40 ♖d5+ ♔g6 41 ♖g7+ ♔xg7 42 ♖xg5+ ♔f6 43 ♖b5 a6 44 ♖b6+ ♔e7 45 ♔h2 ♔d7 46 ♔h3 ♔c7 47 ♖b3 ♔d6 48 g4 ♔e5 49 ♔h4 ♔f6 50 ♖b6+ ♔g7 51 ♔h5 a5 52 ♖b7+ ♔g8 53 a4 1-0

Karpov won the match 4½-3½ and went through to the final.

An interesting description of the winner was given in a post-match interview by Mark Dvoretsky:

'I would single out three factors, the combination of which for a long time gave Karpov an appreciable advantage over the leading grandmasters in the world. Firstly, he was always a brilliant intuitive player, he had a splendid feeling for the peculiarities of a position, and he played easily and confidently. Secondly, Karpov is an ideal player, a competitor. Previously he hardly ever lost his head, he knew what to do and when, where to take a risk; subtly sensing his opponent's condition, he would find the continuations that were most unpleasant for him. Thirdly, in his time the long-standing world champion made use of the services of virtually all the leading grandmasters in the country – and this was of enormous benefit to him in the assimilation of theory.

'Today the effect of these factors, which strongly distinguished Karpov among other players, has diminished somewhat. He no longer trusts his unique intuition, he spends much time in thought, and he gets into time-trouble. His previously impeccable playing mechanism also does not always operate: now Karpov's decisions are affected sometimes by either fears, or tiredness, or something else. Finally, today the ex-world champion's staff of trainers is considerably reduced.'

Nevertheless, in contrast to certain other stars of that time, which sparkled close to the chess summit and then faded, Karpov's star burned with a powerful light for almost a whole decade more.

Genre Crisis

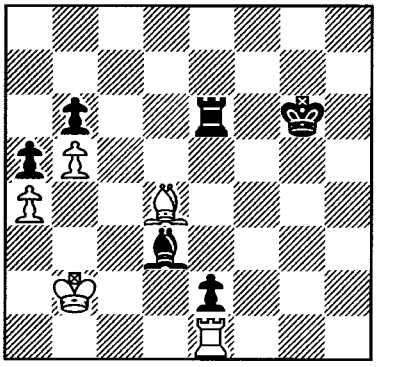
After his confident victory over Timman in the final Candidates match (Kuala-Lumpur, March 1990) the ex-champion stated: 'With time, with age, I have to look for new stimuli for myself, to find the strength that is so necessary for a fight. But in this case I simply want to win against Kasparov.' And our fifth

match for the crown (New York/Lyon, October-December 1990) was, as usual, a tough fight. For some reason Karpov temporarily avoided the Caro-Kann and replied to 1 e4 only with 1...e5. Four zeroes in the open games predetermined his overall defeat (11½-12½).

Karpov again had to begin the next qualifying cycle from the Candidates quarter-final match. I well remember how during the drawing of lots, which took place in February 1991 at the opening of the tournament in Linares, he literally shone with happiness when he was paired with the 21-year-old Vishy Anand. For the first time a match opponent of Karpov was young enough to be his son! It seemed improbable that the very talented and promising, but still too young and inexperienced Indian grandmaster would be able to offer serious resistance to such a giant of world chess as Anatoly Karpov. In Linares, incidentally, both of them performed indifferently (there it was another brilliant leader of the new generation who shone – Vasily Ivanchuk).

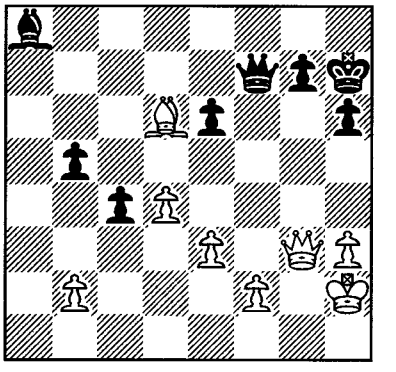
But the match with Anand (Brussels, August 1991) turned out to be even more difficult for Karpov than his match with Yusupov, and it took a very similar course. Possibly he was again affected by the unaccustomed six-hour time control, but more probably it was general psychological tiredness (which later was to cause his downfall in the semi-final with Short). At any event, the parade of mutual mistakes and omissions in the Brussels match broke all conceivable records.

They played to the best of eight games. As in the match with Sokolov four years earlier, the two players contested only two openings – the Caro-Kann Defence and the Meran Variation, prepared by Anand specially for this match. In the 1st game Vishy chose a rare variation against the Caro-Kann (1 e4 c6 2 d3) and was outplayed in quiet manoeuvring. But towards the end of the sixth hour of play, in the time scramble before the second control, Karpov missed a win.



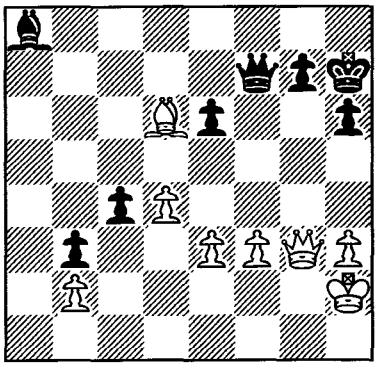
59...♗f5? (the simple 59...♔f5 and ...♔e4 would have won) **60 ♗xb6! ♖xb6 61 ♖xe2 ♖d6 62 ♔c3! ♖d3+ 63 ♔c4 ♖a3 64 ♔c5 ♖xa4 65 b6 ♖b4 66 ♖a2 ♖b1 67 ♖xa5** with a draw on the 76th move.

After this the play of both contestants became feverish. In the 2nd game, where for the first time he encountered Anand's 'Meran', the ex-champion played uncertainly in the middlegame and only saved himself literally by a miracle.



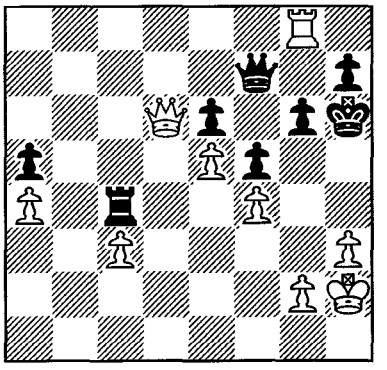
42...b4?! (42...♕f5 43 ♗e5 g5! was simpler – Anand) **43 f3!** (the only chance) **43...b3?**

Winning a pawn, but allowing White to set up a fortress. According to Anand, 43...c3 44 bxc3 b3 45 ♗a3 ♗xf3 was better, but 43...♕b7! was even stronger, with the decisive threat of ...c4-c3.



44 ♗b4 ♗xf3 45 ♕f4 ♕b7 46 ♗c3 with a draw on the 73rd move.

In the 3rd game, Anand managed to seize the initiative after an unpretentiously played opening and achieve a completely won position. But in his opponent's time-trouble he missed a quick win on the 38th move, and then he altogether allowed him to slip out.

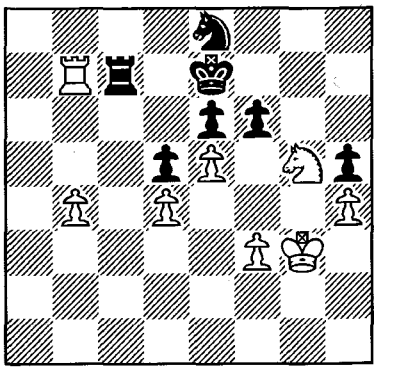


45 ♖f8??

The game would have concluded instantly after 45 ♕d8! ♖xf4 46 g4! with the decisive threat of ♕h4 mate.

45...♕b7 46 ♕d8 (46 ♖g8(f6) ♕e4 47 ♕f8+ ♔h5 48 ♖xg6 no longer wins in view of 48...♕xf4+ 49 ♖g3 h6! Anand) **46...♕e4 47 ♕h4+ ♔g7 ½-½**

In the 4th game, as a result of a sharp opening skirmish, Karpov gained an obvious advantage (cf. *Game No.95*, note to White's 10th move) and by accurate play he converted it into a win. It appeared that everything was settled – but that wasn't the case! In the 5th game, against the Caro-Kann Defence, Anand chose the 3 e5 variation, its unhurried version with ♘f3 and ♗e2, which was then coming into fashion. And he completely outplayed his formidable opponent!



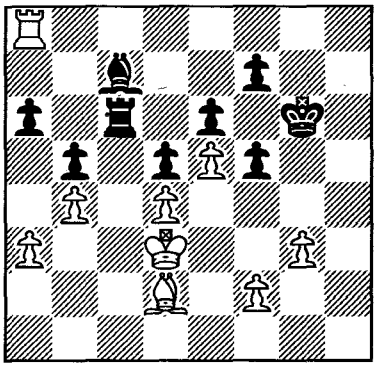
61 exf6+? (the transition into a knight ending would have won easily – 61 ♖xc7+ ♘xc7 62 ♘h7 etc.) **61...♔xf6 62 ♖b8 ♘d6 63 ♔f4 ♖c1**

The sealed move. The adjourned position looks hopeless for Black, but during the resumption Anand blundered on the 74th move, and 20 moves later a draw was agreed.

In the 6th game, as in the 2nd, Karpov again handled a 'Meran' middlegame badly. Anand gained a decisive advantage and after the adjournment he won on the 71st move. But that same day, a little earlier, Vishy missed a win in the adjourned 5th game... If he had won it, the situation would have been a mirror reflection of Baguio, where Karpov achieved something similar (on the resumption of the 13th and 14th games). What in fact resulted was a 'mirror' of the 1989 match, where by contrast Yusupov, although without any adjournments, won the 5th game and missed a win in the 6th.

At any event, the match score became

equal. In the 7th game, again in a quiet Caro-Kann, Anand conducted the middlegame very subtly, obtained a better ending and... missed yet another chance to take the lead.



41 ♖c8? (41 ♖g8+! ♔h7 42 ♖c8 would have placed Black in a very difficult position: 42...♔g6 43 ♗f4! ♖c4 44 ♖g8+ ♔h7 45 ♖a8 Anand) **41...f6! 42 ♗c3** (if 42 ♗f4 or 42 exf6, Black is saved by 42...♖c4) **42...♔f7 43 exf6 ♔xf6 44 ♗d2 ♖c4 45 ♖f8+ ♔g6 46 ♖a8 ♖c6** with a draw on the 63rd move.

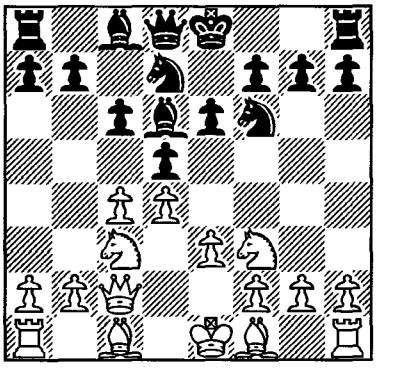
Then came the 8th, concluding game – and again the Meran Variation. And again, as in the match with Yusupov, at the decisive moment the ex-champion employed a comparatively fresh idea and achieved the turning point in this extremely difficult encounter.

Game 95
A.Karpov-V.Anand
Candidates Match,
Brussels 1991, 8th game
Semi-Slav Defence D46

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 e3 ♘bd7 6 ♕c2

Since the 'Meran' was a new opening for Anand, Karpov deliberately avoided the most heavily-analysed line with 6 ♗d3 (*Game Nos.80, 103 and 105*) throughout the match; besides, he had already successfully employed 6 ♕c2 against Van der Wiel (Tilburg 1988).

6...♗d6



7 ♗e2

Closer to the end of the century Karpov would develop his bishop at d3 – the generally recognised way of fighting for the initiative.

7...0-0 8 0-0 dxc4

With the bishop on e2, relieving the tension in the centre can be delayed. 8...b6 is sounder, exploiting the fact that after 9 e4 the double exchange on e4 does not lose a pawn, as in the event of 7 ♗d3. In the game Karpov-Kaidanov (Tilburg 1993) 9...♘xe4 10 ♘xe4 dxe4 11 ♕xe4 ♗b7 12 ♗d3 g6 13 ♗h6 ♖e8 14 ♖ad1 f5 15 ♕e3 c5 led to a roughly equal game.

9 ♗xc4 ♕e7

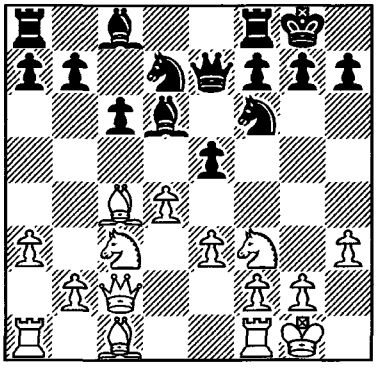
A *tabiya* of the even-numbered games of the match. It was only in the 2nd game that Anand played 9...a6 followed by 10 ♖d1 ♕e7!? 11 h3 b5 12 ♗d3 c5 with equality, and in the future it was this move that would be judged the most flexible, enabling Black to retain various options involving both ...b7-b5 (and then ...c6-c5), and also ...e6-e5.

10 a3

Before this Karpov played 10 h3 – and in the 4th game he achieved success after 10...a6 11 e4! e5 12 ♖d1! b5 13 ♗f1 c5 14 d5 c4!? 15 a4 ♖b8 16 axb5 axb5 17 ♖a5! b4 18 ♘a4 ♕d8 19 ♖a7 b3!? 20 ♕e2 ♘c5 21 ♘xc5 ♗xc5 22 ♖a1! c3! 23 ♘xe5! c2 24 ♖d3 ♕e8? (24...♗d7! Spassky) 25 ♘c6 ♖b6 26 ♗e3 ♘xe4 27 ♗xc5 ♘xc5 28 ♖e3... 1-0.

But he was apparently dissatisfied with the outcome of the opening in the 6th game, where after 10...c5 Anand obtained good play (11 dxc5 ♗xc5 12 e4 ♗d6 13 ♘d4?! ♘e5), although later it transpired that this move does not give full equality.

10...e5 11 h3



It was for this position that Karpov was aiming (the same could have occurred after 10 h3 e5 11 a3). The modern interpretation of this position is as follows: White has made some useful pawn moves and he now intends to deploy his pieces suitably (♗a2, then perhaps ♗d2). The struggle revolves around the pawn tension in the centre, the capture on d4 being unfavourable for Black, since it opens the diagonal for the bishop at c1 and also the e-file for an attack on his queen. Therefore he must also wait, endeavouring to make useful moves, but their choice is restricted. The retreat of the bishop from d6 suggests itself, to reduce the effect of the potential threat ♘h4, which becomes pressing if ...h7-h6 is played – but Black needs this move, to impart greater strength to the ...e5-e4 advance (11...e4 12 ♘g5). It is around such nuances that the opening battle is fought.

11...♗c7

At one time the rather artificial 11...♗b8 was deemed more subtle. The temporary shutting in of the rook was considered less important than the bishop at c7 being undefended in some variations. In several games, including some involving Karpov, the set-up 11...♗b8 12 ♗a2 h6 13 ♘h4 ♖d8 14 ♘f5 ♕e8 showed itself to be good. But then it transpired that the natural 11...♗c7 also does not spoil anything.

12 ♗a2 h6 13 ♘h4 ♖e8

13...exd4? is unsuccessful: after 14 ♘f5 ♕e5 15 f4 ♕e8 16 exd4 White dominates, and after 16...♘b6? the typical stroke 17 ♘xh6+ is decisive. Black could not employ the other set-up 13...♖d8 14 ♘f5 ♕e8 on account of 15 ♘b5! It was this nuance that forced attention to be drawn to 11...♗b8.

14 ♘f5 ♕f8 15 ♘b5 (15 d5 has also been tried, but without particular success)

15...♗b8 16 ♗d2!

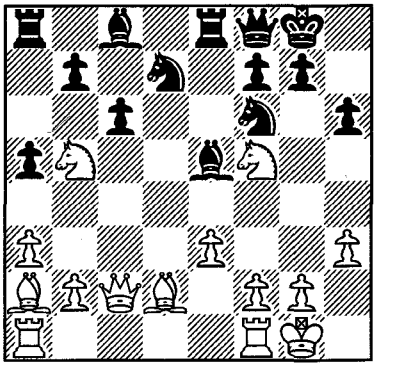
With the threat – no more and no less – of trapping the queen.

16...a5

As has already been mentioned, 16...exd4 17 exd4 is unfavourable for Black. But now energetic action is demanded of White – all his pieces are hanging, and if he does not exploit the dominating position of the knight at f5, Black will 'unravel himself' and will be excellently placed.

17 dxe5 ♗xe5?!

An error, although the influence of this move on the outcome of the game was exaggerated. Black had two sensible alternatives: 17...♘xe5 18 ♘bd4 c5 or even 17...♖xe5 18 ♘c3 ♘c5, driving away the knight from f5 and after 19 ♘g3 ♖e8 20 f4 ♗a7 obtaining a complicated position with chances for both sides.



18 f4!

White increases his attacking potential on the kingside. Black cannot be satisfied with 18...cxb5? 19 fxe5 ♖xe5 (19...♘xe5 20 ♘xh6+) 20 ♗c3 and he is forced to retreat his bishop. Thus White has solved the problem of maintaining his knight at f5.

18...♗b8 19 ♘c3 ♖d8?!

The knight at f5 is too dangerous, and in the first instance Black should have begun a fight against it – 19...♘c5!? It is true that he has to reckon with 20 ♘xh6+ gxh6 21 ♕g6+ ♕g7 22 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 23 ♗xe8 ♘xe8, but the evaluation of this position is not so obvious. In the endgame – 24 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 – Black has nothing to fear (if 25 e4, then 25...♘d6 is strong). After 24 ♕h5 ♗a7 it is certainly better to be playing White, but there is a tense struggle in prospect, in which Black has his counter-chances.

In the event of the preparatory 19...♔h8 White has time to transform his weak e3-pawn into a significant attacking piece. The tactical rejoinder 20 e4 ♘c5 21 e5 ♘fe4 22 ♘xh6 gxh6 23 ♘xe4 ♗f5 provokes a queen sacrifice: 24 ♕xc5!? (24 ♖ae1!? ♘xe4 25 ♖xe4 ♗a7+ 26 ♔h1 ♗d4 27 ♗e1! is also promising) 24...♗a7 25 ♕xa7 ♖xa7 26 ♘d6 ♗e6 27 ♘xe8 ♕xe8 28 ♗xe6 fxe6 29 f5 exf5 30 ♖xf5 ♕d7 31 ♖f2 with good material compensation and an attack.

Anand's move pursues the same aim: it prepares ...♘c5, while avoiding ♘xh6+. But Karpov finds a drawback to the position of the black rook at d8.

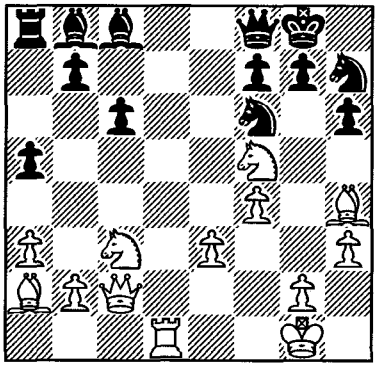
20 ♗e1! (if 20...♘c5, then 21 ♗h4 is very strong) **20...♘h7 21 ♗h4 ♘df6 22 ♖ad1**

White has clearly made progress: he has retained his mobile pawn pair and the powerful bishop at a2 and knight at f5, his other bishop has moved from c1 to an active position at h4, while Black's pieces are huddled on the 8th rank and instead of going to c5 his knight has ended up at h7. And in particular – 23 ♘xh6+ is threatened.

22...♖xd1

Radical measures with 22...♗xf5 23 ♕xf5 ♗a7 24 ♗f2 ♕c5? would have given White a probably won endgame after 25 ♕xc5 ♗xc5 26 e4 ♗xf2+ 27 ♔xf2 (his bishop is very strong!). But 24...b5! would undoubtedly have made things more difficult for him.

23 ♖xd1



23...♗e6??

A blunder, which has more than one refutation! The threat of 24 ♘xh6+ gxh6 25 ♕g6+ ♕g7 26 ♖d8+ would have been parried both by 23...♗xf5 (with the same idea 24 ♕xf5 ♗a7 25 ♗f2 b5), and 23...♗c7, after which nothing forced is apparent. If 24 ♘e4, then 24...♗xf5 25 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 26 ♕xf5 ♖d8 with mass simplification. And although by 24 ♔h1! White would have retained the advantages of his position – say, 24...♗xf5 25 ♕xf5 ♖d8 26 ♖f1 etc., there would still have been a tough struggle in prospect.

24 ♗xe6 fxe6 25 ♕b3

Now the curtain can be lowered. White would also have won with the flamboyant 25 ♘xh6+ gxh6 26 ♕g6+ ♔h8 27 ♘e4! ♘d5 (27...♘xe4 28 ♖d7 ♕g8 29 ♕xe4) 28 ♖xd5 exd5 29 ♗f6+ ♘xf6 30 ♘xf6.

25...♕e8 26 ♘xg7! (Anand's further resistance can be explained only by the fact that this was the last game) **26...♕f7 27 ♘xe6 ♗a7 28 ♗f2 ♖e8 29 ♘d4 ♕xb3 30 ♘xb3 ♗xe3 31 ♗xe3 ♖xe3 32 ♘xa5 1-0**

Black resigned, and Karpov won the match – 4½-3½.

Two difficult matches – and two wins in decisive games! An amazing coincidence, wouldn't you agree? But only at first sight. In fact Karpov again displayed his rare fighting qualities in critical situations, showing that he had not forgotten how to win 'to order'.

A month later the ex-world champion performed splendidly in the first – and alas, as it turned out, the last – stage of the second World Cup (Reykjavik, autumn 1991). Only a missed win during the resumption of his last-round game with Chandler (a draw on the 119th move!) denied him clear first place: 1-2. Ivanchuk and Karpov – 10½ out of 15. But soon Vishy also demonstrated his potential, winning a kind of 'USSR super-championship' (Reggio Emilia, 1991/92): 1. Anand – 6 out of 9; 2-3. Gelfand and Kasparov – 5½; 4. Karpov – 5; 5-7. Ivanchuk, Khalifman and Polugayevsky – 4½, etc.

After his match with Anand the 'anti-Meran' variation with 6 ♕c2 became firmly established in Karpov's repertoire and brought him several striking wins, gained at a time when the leading grandmasters were only just groping for the correct ways out of this insidious labyrinth. Very characteristic is this game with the 20-year-old Alexei Shirov – another rising star from the end of the 20th century.

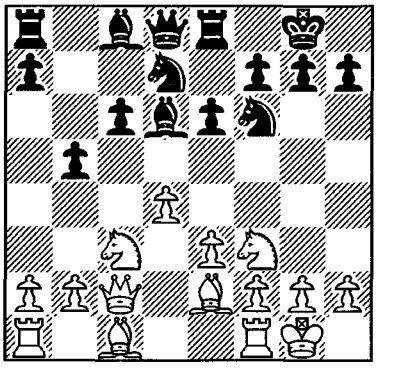
Game 96
A.Karpov-A.Shirov
Biel 1992, 13th round
Semi-Slav Defence D46

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♘f3 ♘bd7 6 ♕c2 ♗d6 7 ♗e2 0-0 8 0-0 dxc4 9 ♗xc4 b5

Seemingly more energetic than 9...♕e7 (*Game No.95*), and a typical 'Meran' continuation. The fact that it was chosen by Shirov is not surprising. At that time the theory of this variation was not developed at all.

10 ♗e2 ♖e8

Or 10...♕c7 11 ♗d2 ♖e8 12 ♖ac1 with some advantage to White (Karpov-Van der Wiel, Tilburg 1988). 10...♗b7 is more natural, but in those years the prevailing opinion was that White's plans should involve e3-e4, and then after ...e6-e5 the black rook will prove well placed (as had already occurred in one of Shirov's games).



11 ♖d1 ♕c7

Since White has not played the opening very actively, Black can permit himself certain liberties, by employing a hybrid of different variations. Even so, experience has shown that in such a set-up the typical manoeuvre ♘c3-e4 enables White to gain the initiative. Incidentally, in the variation 9...a6 10 ♖d1 ♕c7 the move 11 ♘e4! was first tried in practice by grandmaster Epishin, one of Karpov's long-standing assistants.

12 b3 e5 13 h3 (defending against 13...e4)

13...♗b7

Against Tukmakov (Biel Open 1992) Shabalov successfully upheld Black's position after 13...a6 14 ♗b2 exd4 15 ♘xd4 ♗b7 16 ♘f5 ♗f8 17 ♘d5 ♘xd5 18 ♖xd5 ♖e6. Here 18...c5?! is dangerous on account of 19 ♘h6+! gxh6 20 ♕f5 ♗d6 (20...♕c6 21 ♗d3!) 21 ♕g4+ ♔f8 22 ♕g7+ ♔e7 23 ♖f5 ♖f8 24 ♗h5 with an attack.

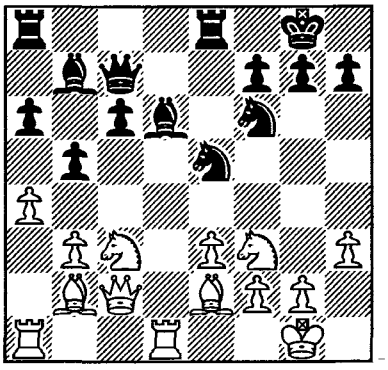
14 ♗b2 a6

Shirov prepares 15...exd4 16 ♘xd4 c5. The alternative is 14...exd4 15 ♘xd4 and only then 15...a6 (cf. the Tukmakov-Shabalov game). 15 ♖xd4!? is interesting, so as after 15...♗c5 to reply 16 ♖h4 h6 17 ♘e4, and if 15...♘e5 16

♖ad1 ♘xf3+ 17 ♗xf3 ♗e5 to sacrifice the exchange: 18 ♘xb5! ♕b8 19 ♘d6 ♗xd4 20 ♖xd4 with excellent prospects.

15 dxe5 ♘xe5 16 a4!

Hindering ...c6-c5 as much as possible, without which the future of the bishop at b7 looks bleak.



16...♖ad8?

It is hard to call such a natural move a mistake. The immediate 16...b4?! 17 ♘b1 c5 18 ♘bd2 would have given White an enduring positional advantage, thanks to his control of the c4-square and the possibility of an attack on the c5-pawn. The rook move was made in the hope of playing ...b5-b4 at a more convenient moment, but...

Meanwhile Shirov misses a genuinely convenient moment: after 16...♘xf3+! 17 ♗xf3 ♗h2+ 18 ♔h1 ♗e5 it would have been no longer possible to prevent the freeing advance ...c6-c5.

17 ♘g5!

Emphasising that now the knight will establish itself on the key e4-square and, by preventing the ...c6-c5 advance, secure White an enduring positional advantage.

17...♕e7 18 ♘ce4 ♘xe4 19 ♘xe4 ♗b4

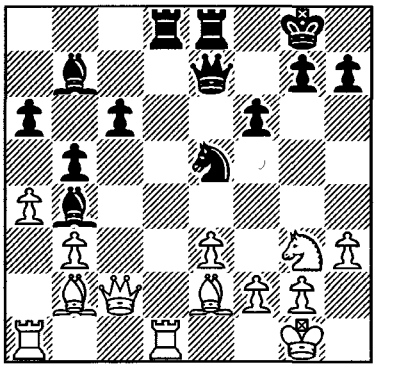
In the event of 19...♗c7 White could have advantageously provoked ...b5-b4: 20 ♗a3 b4 21 ♗b2. Shirov prepares exchanges on the d-file, but Karpov sets him a new problem.

20 ♘g3!

How to counter the threat of ♘f5 followed by f2-f4? 20...g6 suggests itself, but it is not easy to decide on such a weakening of the long dark-squared diagonal with the bishop not at f8, but at b4. And indeed, after 21 ♘e4 defending is no simple matter. If 21...f5, then 22 f4 ♖xd1+ 23 ♖xd1 ♘g4 24 hxg4 ♕xe4 25 ♕xe4 fxe4 26 ♖d7 ♖e7 27 ♖d8+ ♔f7 28 ♖h8 ♔e6 29 g5! is strong, while after 25...♖xe4 26 ♗e5! ♖xe3 27 ♖d8+ ♔f7 28 ♔f1 the bishop at b7 cannot be saved.

20...f6

Shirov thought that this was the lesser evil, but now Karpov immediately exploits the weakening of the light squares.



21 ♗xe5!

An unexpected exchange, which is justified by concrete calculation. After 21...fxe5 (best) 22 ♗d3 g6 23 ♗e4 Black would have faced a cheerless defence, which clearly did not appeal to Shirov.

21...♕xe5?! 22 ♗d3 (how to defend the h7-pawn?) **22...h6?!**

You need to have great courage to decide on 22...g6, allowing 23 ♗xg6 hxg6 24 ♕xg6+ ♔h8 (24...♔f8 25 ♘f5 and wins) 25 ♕h6+ ♔g8 26 ♘h5 f5 27 ♘f6+ ♔f7 28 ♘xe8 ♖xe8. Here White has many tempting continuations, for example: 29 ♕h7+ ♕g7 30 ♖d7+ ♖e7 31 ♕xf5+ ♕f6 with a choice between retaining the queens, and an endgame where the four connected passed pawns should, of course, ensure a win, but the two black bishops plus the potential passed pawn on the c-file should

also not be underestimated.

At the board it is always difficult to solve such problems: the drawbacks to each of the moves are fairly obvious. Shirov, who in this game did not make a single bad move (but a whole series of second-rate ones) preferred not to disrupt the material balance, hoping to survive the opponent's attack on the light squares. But his hopes were not realised: Karpov concludes the game quickly and impressively.

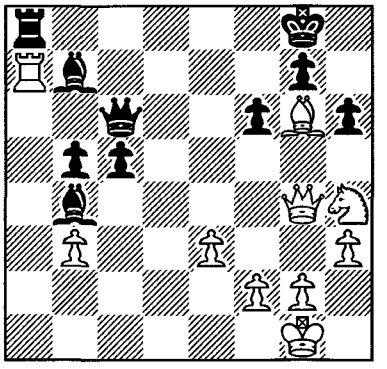
23 ♗g6 ♖f8 24 ♘f5 c5

The other defensive line – 24...♕c5 25 ♕e4 ♗c8 – can also be breached: 26 ♖dc1 ♗xf5 27 ♗xf5 ♗c3 28 axb5! (more accurate than 28 ♕g4 ♕e5, and White does not have the winning ♖a7) 28...axb5 29 ♕g4 ♖a8 30 ♖ab1! with a decisive attack with the opposite-coloured bishops. For example: 30...♕e5 31 ♕g6 ♖fd8 32 ♕h7+ ♔f8 33 ♗g6 (or 33 b4 with the idea of playing the bishop to b3).

25 axb5 axb5 26 ♖a7 ♕c7

There is no defence against the combined attack of all the white pieces. After 26...♖xd1+ 27 ♕xd1 ♕c7 there is the decisive 28 ♘xh6+ gxh6 29 ♗e4 ♖b8 30 ♗xb7 ♔f8 31 ♕h5 ♖xb7 32 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 33 ♕g6+ ♔f8 34 ♕xf6+ ♔g8 35 ♖a6, while if 26...♕b8, then 27 ♘e7+ ♔h8 28 ♗f5! is deadly – the same motif as in the game: the vacating of the key g6-square for the knight.

27 ♘h4 ♖xd1+ 28 ♕xd1 ♖a8 (28...♖d8 29 ♕g4 ♕d7 30 ♖xb7! ♕xb7 31 ♕e6+ ♔h8 32 ♗c2) **29 ♕g4! ♕c6**



30 ♖xb7! ♕xb7 31 ♕e6+ ♔h8 32 ♗e4 1-0

The conclusion of the light-squared symphony! After 32...♖a1+ 33 ♔h2 ♕b8+ 34 f4 White gives mate.

In 1992 Karpov won three tournaments – in Madrid, Biel and Baden-Baden. However, on the whole this year proved to be one of the most tragic in his career: in the spring in Linares he unexpected lost his semi-final Candidates match to Nigel Short: 4-6 (in the other semi-final Yusupov went down by the same score to Timman).

This sensational event provoked a genuine furore in the chess world. The match reviews in the leading chess magazines were littered with garish headlines: 'The end of an era' (*New in Chess*), 'Has the time connection been broken?' (*Chess Herald*), 'End of an era as Westerners oust Russians in World Championship Candidates' (*British Chess Magazine*), 'Downfall of the gods in Linares' (*Schah-Magazin 64*), 'An historic moment – Karpov is knocked out' (*Jaque*), 'Short marks the end of an era' (*Revista Internacional de Ajedrez*) etc.

Hans Ree wrote in *New in Chess*: 'The matches were won by the players with the best time-planning. It was terrible to have to watch Karpov in particular in the appalling time-trouble he was in in nearly every game. And that was not all. His iron nerve seemed to have deserted him. I've seen him in time-trouble before but he always kept his cool. Now he was wriggling with tension, his face wracked with emotion. His psychologist, Zagainov, was in the front row. The man who should have been exuding tranquillity was biting his nails and wringing his hands, as anguished as his pupil.' Soon a book by Rudolf Zagainov, devoted to this match, was published in Moscow with the symbolic title *Porazhenie* (Defeat).

Also interesting were the observations of Valery Murakhveri, a columnist of the magazine *Chess Herald*:

'Karpov possesses a unique match experience. The magazine *Schah-Magazin 64* counted up that over 18 years he has played 254 games in matches, of which 144 have been against Kasparov. With his subtle knowledge of the psychology and philosophy of matchplay, it appeared that Karpov should not have experienced any difficulties in connection with Short's style and manner of play. It should have been expected that Karpov's superiority in strategically defined positions and the endgame would become the decisive factor in the match, since the opponent would hardly be able to neutralise it, even by imposing a purely tactical battle.

'However, the 14-year age difference proved in this match to be a disadvantage to Karpov. Age manifests itself primarily in an ability to maintain a consistently high competitive standard. Against a background of customary successes, increasingly often there are periods of decline, poor form, and elementary ill-health. With some players this occurs earlier, with others later, but a borderline at the age of 40 can be considered more or less normal.

'The situation around Karpov has also changed: in his team, which used to be so numerous and highly-qualified, for various reasons changes and reductions have occurred. This process, to all appearances, has not been a painless one for Karpov: in the press he expressed his grievances to a whole series of grandmasters for not helping him, and helping his opponents. People who supported or served him faithfully have either departed or lost influence, which also could not fail to affect his fighting spirit.'

My own comment on what had happened was as follows: 'For chess it is beneficial that a player from the West should contend for the highest title. This will significantly raise interest in chess in the media and the general public... I do not give preference to either of the finalists – Timman or Short, but for chess it would be better if Short were to win. For the public it is more interesting when the challenger is younger than the champion.'

At the time many thought that this was indeed the end of the Karpov era. No one could even suspect how chess history would change in 1993...

Against the Queen's Indian

The time has come to divert our attention for a short time from the competitive feats of the 12th world champion and talk about his contribution to the theory of the closed games – or more precisely, to his interpretation of those quiet strategic set-ups which corresponded most fully with his style. As I have already mentioned, Karpov felt very confident in the Queen's Indian Defence – with both colours. It is not surprising that many wins by him with White have become classic games for this opening.

In this respect 1993 was a very bountiful year. At the end of February, at the start of the super-tournament in Linares, that annual 'chess Wimbledon', Karpov was twice successful in the Queen's Indian with 4 g3 – against both 4...♗b7 and 4...♗a6.

Game 97
A.Karpov-V.Salov
Linares 1993, 1st round
Queen's Indian Defence E18

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♗b7

Salov played Queen's Indian set-ups often and quite successfully, but against Karpov he was pursued by failures. Thus in Linares 1992 he lost to the ex-champion after 4...♗a6.

5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 ♘c3 ♘e4 7 ♗d2 ♗f6 8 0-0 (8 ♕c2 – *Game No.99*) **8...0-0 9 ♖c1 c5**

This is considered a strategically risky line. However, after 9...d6 10 d5 ♘xd2 11 ♕xd2 in the game Karpov-Salov (Reykjavik 1991) White won in a protracted manoeuvring struggle, by exploiting his spatial advantage: 11...♕e7 12 e4 ♘d7 13 ♘d4 ♗xd4 14 ♕xd4 e5 15 ♕d2 a5 16 f4 ♘c5 17 f5 f6 18 ♗f3 etc.

And although during the course of the game Salov had chances of sharpening the situation, he apparently did not like the very character of the play.

10 d5 exd5 11 cxd5 ♘xd2 12 ♘xd2 d6 13 ♘de4!

White establishes his knight in the centre, to exploit its power for the preparation of a pawn offensive on the kingside.

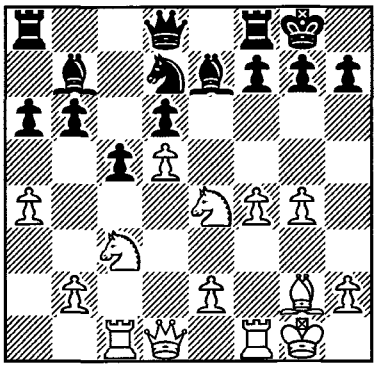
13...♗e7

In the game Kasparov-Ligterink (Malta Olympiad 1980) Black made an unsuccessful response – 13...♖e8?! 14 ♕d2 a6, with 15 b4! White emphasised the lack of harmony in the placing of his pieces, and after 15...♗e7 16 bxc5 bxc5 17 ♕f4 ♕c7 18 ♘a4 ♕a5 19 ♖b1! ♗xd5 20 ♘b6 ♗xe4 21 ♗xe4 ♖a7 he landed a decisive blow – 22 ♘c8!

Salov should have been better prepared. In retreating his bishop, he was obviously hoping that the two bishops would allow him to create counterplay by the advance of his queenside pawns.

14 f4 ♘d7 15 g4! a6 16 a4

Not allowing an immediate ...b6-b5.



16...♖e8?

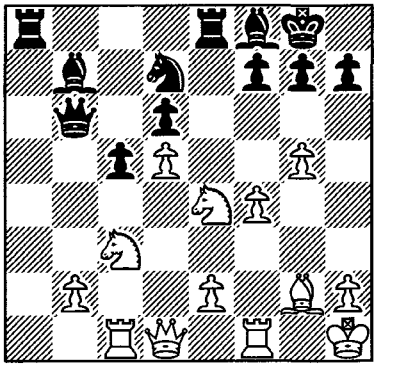
Too calm an attitude to the positional threat of g4-g5, gaining space and with the real prospect of an attack. If Black wanted to play ...b6-b5, it was better to do this immediately – 16...b5 17 axb5 axb5 18 ♘xb5 ♕b6, although after 19 ♘bc3 he hardly has sufficient compensation for the pawn. However, Black is not yet obliged to go in for such extreme measures – for example, the simple 16...h6 is possible.

But the most interesting move is 16...♘f6. After 17 ♘f2 the reply 17...h6 18 h4 g5?! is excessively risky on account of 19 hxg5 hxg5 20 e3, and the weakening of the kingside may prove critical. It is safer to return – 17...♘d7, in order after 18 g5 to play the timely 18...f6, and if 18 ♕c2 to mechanically prevent the advance of the white pawns – 18...h6.

17 g5 ♗f8 18 ♔h1 b5

It is probable that Salov decided on this with a heavy heart, but there is no other way of creating counterplay.

19 axb5 axb5 20 ♘xb5 ♕b6 21 ♘bc3



Black's activity on the queenside is aimed merely at diverting White's attention from the kingside. However, even if should succeed in winning the b2-pawn, this will only signify the restoring of material equality, and not at all the creation of real counterplay.

21...♕b4

Black prevents an increase in the attacking potential after ♖f3-h3, but now the white queen heads there, and things become even more difficult for him.

22 ♕d3 ♘b6 23 ♕g3! ♔h8 24 ♖cd1

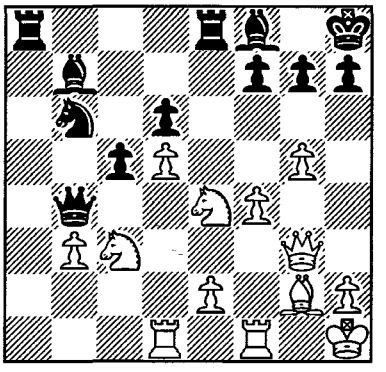
White has an extra pawn, well placed pieces and the prospect of a direct attack on the king, whereas the opponent's counterplay is illusory – all the indications are that Black has completely lost the battle.

24...♘c4

It was possible to eliminate the b2-pawn and even create the semblance of a counterattack – 24...♘a4 25 f5 ♘xb2 26 ♖b1 ♖a3, but after 27 ♖f4 c4 28 ♖h4 White would have begun a decisive assault: 28...♖xe4 29 ♖xe4 ♖xc3 30 ♖e8 ♔g8 31 ♕h4, and there is no defence against 32 g6. It is also not possible to restrain the advance of the pawns: 24...♗c8 25 f5 ♖e5 26 g6! ♗xf5 27 ♘g5! ♗xg6 28 ♘xf7+ ♗xf7 29 ♖xf7 followed by playing the bishop from g2 to e6.

25 b3! ♘b6

The knight is forced to return empty-handed. In the event of 25...♕xb3 26 ♖b1 ♘b2 White has a pleasant choice between continuing the attack (27 f5) and winning material – 27 ♖fd1 etc.



26 g6!

The most energetic – 'Sicilian style' – development of the attack. White would also have won after 26 f5 ♖a3 27 g6 f6 28 gxh7 ♖xb3? 29 ♕g6, and although 28...♘d7 enables Black to resist somehow, after 29 ♘xd6 he is unable to hold out.

White's position is so strong that one can observe a rare instance in the practice of the great pragmatist Karpov: he rejects gain of material in favour of a direct attack!

26...fxg6 27 f5 gxf5 28 ♖xf5 ♘d7 29 ♖df1

29 ♘xd6 ♗xd6 30 ♕xd6 ♘f8 (or 30...♕xc3 31 ♕xd7 ♗a6 32 ♖df1) 31 ♕g3 was also possible, but Karpov no longer wants to deviate from his general plan of concentrating pieces in the vicinity of the black king.

29...♘e5 30 ♖5f4 ♕b6 (it is also bad to play 30...♘g6 31 ♖g4 – with the threat of ♖xg6 – 31...♘e5 32 ♖h4) **31 ♘g5 ♘g6**

This allows an elegant conclusion. But otherwise the white bishop joins the attack with decisive effect: 31...♗e7 32 ♘f7+ ♘xf7 33 ♖xf7 ♗f8 34 ♗e4!, or 31...g6 32 ♖h4 h5 33 ♘f7+ ♔g7 34 ♗e4.

32 ♘f7+ ♔g8 33 ♕xg6! 1-0

In view of 33...hxg6 34 ♖h4.

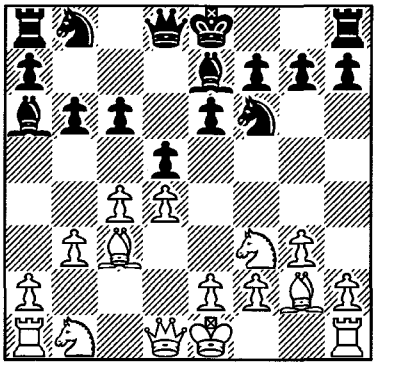
In the 2nd round the ex-champion lost to Timman, but this did nothing to cool his fighting spirit.

Game 98
A.Karpov-A.Beliavsky
Linares 1993, 3rd round
Queen's Indian Defence E15

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♗a6 (4...♗b7 – *Game Nos.97 and 99*) **5 b3 ♗b4+**

5...b5 is questionable – a month earlier in Wijk aan Zee Karpov twice defeated Christiansen after 6 cxb5 ♗xb5 7 ♗g2 ♗b4+ 8 ♗d2 a5 9 0-0 (and, incidentally, he won that knock-out tournament).

6 ♗d2 ♗e7 7 ♗g2 (7 ♘c3 – *Game Nos.90 and 91*) **7...c6 8 ♗c3 d5**



9 ♘e5 ♘fd7 10 ♘xd7 ♘xd7 11 ♘d2 0-0 12 0-0

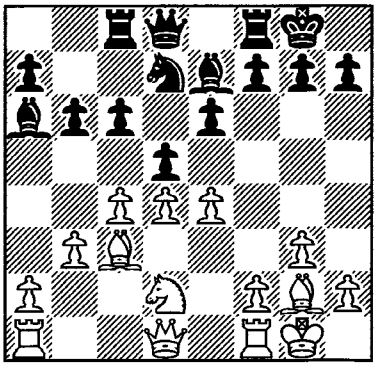
One of those variations that Karpov employed with both colours.

12...♖c8

The flexible move 12...♘f6 is also popular, and it has occurred many times in his games, for example: Karpov-Portisch (Rotterdam 1989), or Yusupov-Karpov (1st matchgame, London 1989).

13 e4

A position has been reached from the memorable 6th game of our first match (1984/85), where I was White, and from the 21st game of the return match (1986), where Karpov was White.



13...c5

Another idea of the Hungarian players. The earlier continuation – 13...b5 14 ♖e1 dxc4 15 bxc4, which was tested in the aforementioned matches, is still topical in the 21st century (I should mention the game Bologan-Kramnik, Dortmund 2004).

14 exd5 exd5 15 dxc5 dxc4 16 c6 cxb3 17 ♖e1 ♗b5

A sound enough reply, but today 17...b2 18 ♗xb2 ♘c5 is considered best (a recent example: Topalov-Anand, FIDE World Championship, San Luis 2005).

18 axb3!

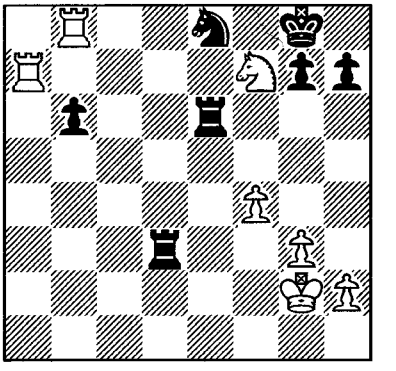
At one time they used to play 18 ♘xb3 and it was thought that Black had no problems in equalising. A model example was provided by the attractive drawn game Yusupov-Sax (Rotterdam 1989): 18...♗xc6 19 ♗xg7 ♔xg7 20 ♘d4 ♗xg2 21 ♘f5+ ♔h8 22 ♖xe7 ♗h3 23 ♕d4+ ♘e5 24 ♕xe5+ f6 25 ♕e2 ♗xf5 26 ♖d1 ♗g4.

18...♗c6 19 ♗xc6 ♖xc6 20 ♖xa7!

It turns out that this promises White some initiative, since 20...♖xc3? fails to the paradoxical retreat 21 ♘b1!, gaining material: 21...♖c7 22 ♖xc7 ♕xc7 23 ♖xe7 ♖d8 24 ♕d5! ♕c1+ (24...♖f8? 25 ♖xd7 ♕c1+ 26 ♕d1) 25 ♔g2 ♖f8 26 ♖xd7 ♕xb1 27 ♖d6! b5 28 ♖b6, winning the b-pawn.

20...♗f6

In the colourful game Karpov-Korchnoi (Tilburg 1991) after 20...♘f6 21 ♕f3 ♕d5? (21...♖c7 is better) 22 ♖exe7 ♕xf3 23 ♘xf3 ♖xc3 24 ♘g5 White gained a strong attack, despite the exchange of queens: 24...♖xb3 25 ♘xf7 ♖e8 26 ♖eb7 ♖e1+ 27 ♔g2 ♘e8 28 ♖b8 (threatening ♘d6) 28...♖d3 (not 28...♖e6? 29 ♘d6 ♔f8 30 ♖f7+ etc.) 29 f4 (intending ♘e5; 29 ♖xb6 ♖d2! and ...♖ee2) 29...♖e6.



Analysis diagram

30 h4? (a time-trouble mistake – 30 ♔h3 ♖de3 31 ♘g5 ♖e7 32 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 33 ♖xb6 would have retained good winning chances) 30...♖e2+ 31 ♔h3 h5! (by giving up a piece, Black weaves a mating net, from which White can escape only at the cost of perpetual check) 32 ♘e5 ♖d1! 33 ♖xe8+ ♔h7 34 g4 ♖e3+ 35 ♔g2 ♖d2+ 36 ♔f1 ♖h3 37 ♔g1 ♖g3+ 38 ♔f1 ♖h3 39 ♔g1 ♖g3+ 40 ♔f1 ♖h3 ½-½.

20...♗f6 is more solid, since the bishop at e7 and Black's other pieces occupy passive positions and are subject to attacks.

21 ♘c4

21 ♘e4 has also been tried, although after 21...♗xc3 22 ♖xd7 ♕a8 Black has usually maintained the balance.

21...♘c5

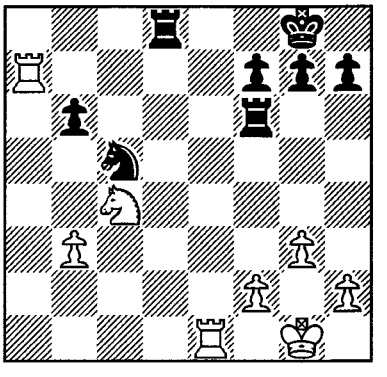
It is interesting that in the 16th game of his match with Kamsky (Elista 1996), when the outcome was already practically decided, Karpov played this variation as Black and replied with 21...♗xc3 here. But after 22 ♖xd7 ♕f6 23 ♖e4 he overlooked an elementary tactical stroke – 23...♕f5? 24 ♖f4 ♕e6 25 ♖dxf7!, based on the lack of an escape square for the black king. If he had concerned himself with this by playing 23...h6, equality would still have been achievable.

22 ♕xd8 ♖xd8

22...♗xd8 would have allowed White to retain very strong pressure in the endgame by 23 ♗b4 ♗c7 24 ♖d1.

23 ♗xf6 ♖xf6?

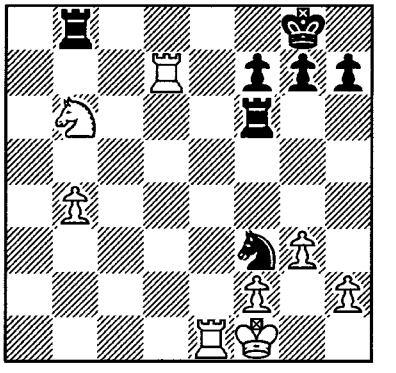
After the match with Kamsky, in the game Van Wely-Karpov (Cap d'Agde rapidplay 1996) 23...gxf6! was played, and 24 ♘e3 ♘xb3 25 ♘f5 ♖c1 led in the end to a draw. In the event of 24 ♖ee7 ♘xb3 25 ♘e3 ♖f8 26 ♘f5 Black has the strong move 26...h5!, freeing his king and neutralising White's threat of 27 ♘h6+ ♔g7 28 ♘xf7 ♔g6, when he has nothing to fear.



24 b4! ♘e6?!

It turns out that the knight has no good square. The lesser evil was to go into a rook ending a pawn down: 24...b5 (24...♘a4, with the same aim, does not work, since instead of 25 ♖xa4 White has the strong 25 ♖d7! ♖f8 26 ♖e5 with a great advantage) 25 bxc5 bxc4 26 ♖a4 ♖c6 27 ♖xc4 – the presence of all four rooks leaves Black hopes of saving the game.

25 ♘xb6 ♘g5 26 ♖d7! ♘f3+ 27 ♔f1 ♖b8



28 ♖ed1

Skilfully combining attacking operations with his small army and the threat of transposing into a technically won endgame, Karpov accurately converts his advantage.

28...♔f8 29 ♘d5 ♖e6 30 ♘c7 ♖h6 31 h4 g5 32 hxg5 ♘xg5

After 32...♖h1+ 33 ♔g2 ♖xd1 34 ♖xd1 ♘xg5 35 ♖d5 ♘e6 36 ♖b5 Black has a choice between several lost endings.

33 ♖1d5! ♘e4 34 ♖d8+ ♖xd8 35 ♖xd8+ ♔g7 (the rook ending after 35...♔e7 36 ♖e8+ ♔d7 37 ♖xe4 ♔xc7 38 ♖f4 is completely hopeless) **36 ♘e8+ ♔g6 37 ♔g2 f6 38 ♖d7 ♖h5 39 ♖g7+ ♔h6 40 ♖e7 f5 41 ♖e6+ ♔g5 1-0**

And in view of the obvious 42 f4+ ♔g4 43 ♖xe4 Black resigned.

I should remind you that by this time Short had won the final Candidates match against Timman (6½-4½) and had suggested to me

that with one sweep we should sever the mass of problems that had accumulated in the negotiations with Campomanes: to contest the world championship outside of the framework of FIDE! Deciding that this was a convenient moment finally to place chess on a professional basis, I agreed. And on 26th February, at the height of the battles in Linares, Short and I made an unexpected statement, which had far-reaching consequences for the chess world: about the fact that 'Garry Kasparov and Nigel Short have agreed to play their match outside the jurisdiction of FIDE. The match will be played under the auspices of a new body, The Professional Chess Association... which is intended to represent chess professionals worldwide and work for the good of the game.'

But the super-tournament continued to run its course. After eight rounds Anand was leading, half a point ahead of Karpov and me. But in the 9th and 10th rounds I managed to win with White against Anand and with Black against Karpov (the Sämisch Variation in the King's Indian Defence – this was our 162nd encounter!), which decided the outcome of the event as a whole: 1. Kasparov – 10 out of 13; 2-3. Anand and Karpov – 8½; 4. Shirov – 8; 5. Kramnik – 7½; 6-7. Ivanchuk and Salov – 6½; 8. Beliavsky – 6, etc.

Within a week, on 23rd March, without further ado the FIDE management deprived Short and I of the rights of champion and challenger – and at the same time offered the right to play a 'match for the world championship' to the two reserve candidates, the losers in the qualifying cycle, Timman and Karpov!

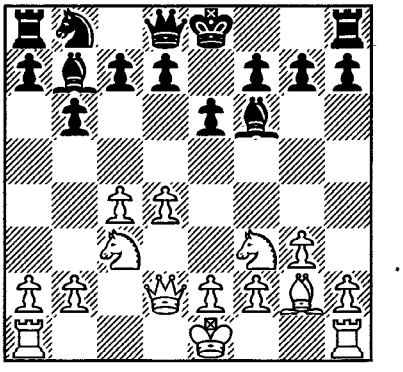
This sudden chance to regain the crown, even if only the FIDE version of it, literally reanimated and transformed the ex-champion. In April and July Karpov won tournaments in Dos Hermanas and Dortmund, and in the autumn, while I was beating Short, he did not allow any chances to Timman, who maintained an equal score only for the first five games...

After gaining the title of FIDE world champion, in November he won his seventh(!) tournament in Tilburg, held on the then fashionable knock-out system. In mini-matches he overcame, one after another, Romanishin, Vyzhmanavin, Kaidanov (both on a tie-break), Yusupov, Beliavsky and, again on a tie-break, Ivanchuk.

Here the Queen's Indian theme was continued by the following game, in which Karpov played the early middlegame in very interesting fashion.

Game 99
A.Karpov-A.Yusupov
Tilburg 1993, 5th round
Queen's Indian Defence E17

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♗b7 5 ♗g2 ♗e7 6 ♘c3 ♘e4 7 ♗d2 ♗f6 8 ♕c2!? (8 0-0 – *Game No.97*) **8...♘xd2 9 ♕xd2**



A typical position: Black has the two bishops, while White dominates the centre and controls more space.

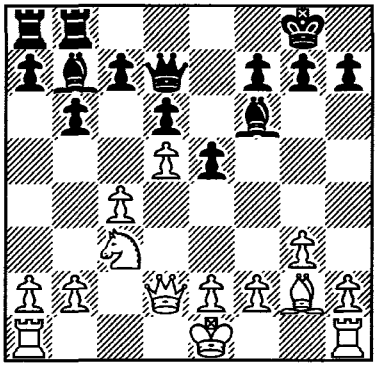
9...d6 10 d5 0-0 11 ♘d4!

Inviting the capture on d4 – this leads to a position similar to the aforementioned Karpov-Salov game (Reykjavik 1991 – cf. *Game No.97*, note to Black's 9th move). Yusupov prefers to retain his bishop.

11...e5 12 ♘c6 ♕d7 13 ♘xb8 ♖fxb8

It would appear that Black has no reason

for complaint. In the event of 14 0-0 he can develop his bishop at g7 and prepare ...f7-f5, and countering this with f2-f4 will lead to the activation of the dark-squared bishop, which has no opponent.



14 h4!

Unexpected and strong. White not only seizes space on the kingside (after ...g7-g6 the attack h4-h5 is possible), but primarily he prepares to bring out his bishop to h3. Its role there is very important, and its exchange after ...♗b7-c8 is advantageous to White, since the weakening of the opponent's light squares will be more keenly felt.

14...a5?!

A routine move for positions of this type, where White usually prepares a pawn offensive on the queenside. Yusupov either did not anticipate what happened next, or else he overestimated the solidity of his defences.

14...a6 would have enabled Black to hope for counterplay. Of course, White has not yet castled long and after 15 ♗h3 ♕e8 16 ♘e4 he could have castled on the kingside. But with this development of events Black would have retained more possibilities than in the game.

15 a4!

Karpov stabilises the situation on the queenside, in order to begin aggressive action on the kingside.

15...♖f8 16 e4 h5 (if 16...g6, then 17 h5 is unpleasant) **17 0-0-0!**

White reveals his cards. His king is completely safe: due to the nature of the pawn structure on the queenside, Black cannot hope to make any undermining pawn moves or pawn storms.

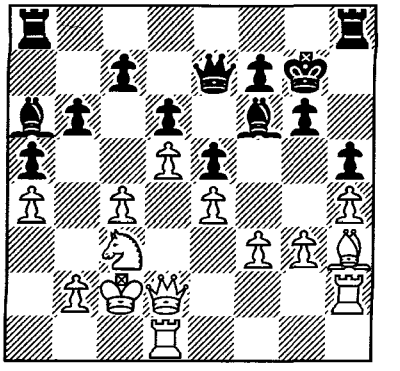
17...g6 18 ♗h3 ♕e7 19 ♔c2

Manoeuvring begins, in a situation where White has more space and possibilities of strengthening his position.

19...♔g7?!

A consistent defensive course. If 19...♗g7, then 20 g4 hxg4 21 ♗xg4 f5 22 ♗f3 looks strong, but after the queen sacrifice 20...♕xh4! 21 gxh5 ♕xh5 22 ♗c8 ♕xd1+ 23 ♕xd1 ♗xc8 (24 ♘b5 ♗d7) the question arises: can White win here?

20 f3 ♖h8 21 ♖h2 ♗a6



22 ♘b5! ♖af8

White is not afraid of the exchange 22...♗xb5 23 cxb5!, leaving opposite-coloured bishops on the board. Of course, Black will defend his c7-pawn with his bishop from d8, but sooner or later White will advantageously advance f3-f4. However, Karpov sets about preparing this breakthrough even without the exchange on b5.

23 ♔b1 ♕d8 24 ♕d3 ♗e7 25 ♖e2 ♗c8?!

Yusupov became tired of waiting and decided nevertheless to exchange bishops, but possibly he should not have done this. Now White has a very easy game, and his knight has gained the opportunity to break through to c6.

26 ♗xc8 ♕xc8 27 ♖g1 ♗d8

This passivity is forced: 27...f5? 28 f4 would

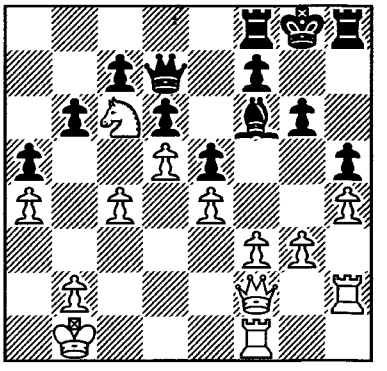
have quickly led to insoluble problems.

28 ♘a7 ♕h3 29 ♕c2 ♖e8 30 ♘c6 ♗f6 31 ♖f2 ♕d7 32 ♕e2 ♖hf8 33 ♖h2

Preparing a favourable moment for g3-g4 or f3-f4. Karpov maintains the tension, realising that it is not easy for Black to guess his opponent's intentions. And indeed, fearing both of these breakthroughs, Yusupov was unable to find a way out of his difficult position.

33...♖h8 34 ♕f2 ♖ef8 35 ♖f1 ♔g8?!

Black could have put up a more tenacious resistance, if he had forestalled the advance of the f-pawn: 35...♖e8 36 g4 ♔g8 37 ♕g3 ♗g7.



36 f4! ♕g4 37 ♕f3! ♖e8 (37...♕xf3 38 ♖xf3 ♖e8 39 ♖hf2 ♖h7 40 f5 is worse for Black) **38 ♕xg4 hxg4 39 f5 g5?!**

This makes it easier for White. 39...♔g7, maintaining the pawn tension, was more tenacious, although I think that White would have gradually decided matters by breaking through on the queenside: ♔c2, b2-b4, and if ...axb4 – ♔b3xb4 etc.

40 h5 ♖a8 41 ♔c2 ♔g7 42 ♔c3 ♖a6 43 ♖a1 ♖ha8 44 b4 ♔f8

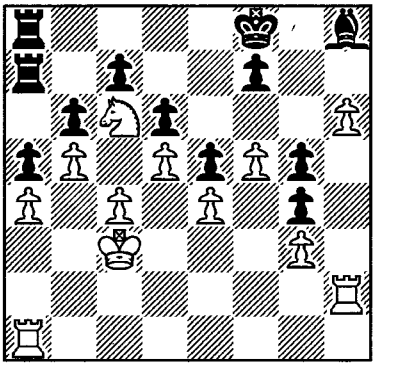
A desperate exchange sacrifice. In the event of 44...axb4+ 45 ♔xb4 ♔h6 the most elegant way to win was pointed out by Ftacnik: 46 ♔b5 ♗g7 47 f6 ♗h8 48 ♖f2 ♔h7 49 h6 ♔g6 50 h7!, and all that is left is a series of 'spite' checks 50...♖a5+ 51 ♘xa5 ♖xa5+ 52 ♔c6 ♖c5+, which culminates in mate: 53 ♔d7 ♖xc4 54 a5 bxa5 55 ♖xa5 ♖xe4 56 ♖a8 ♔xh7 57 ♔e7 etc.

45 b5

White could also have won by 45 bxa5 bxa5 46 ♖b1, but Karpov rightly decided that a 'fortress' would not be achieved.

45...♖6a7 46 h6 ♗h8

It is interesting that after 46...♔g8 47 h7+ ♔h8 48 ♖ah1 ♖b7 49 ♖h6 ♗g7 it is White who sacrifices the exchange – 50 f6! ♗xh6 51 ♖xh6, and Black is absolutely helpless: 51...♖e8 52 ♘e7 (planning ♘f5-e3xg4, which will open a way for the invasion of the king) 52...♖xe7 53 fxe7 ♖b8 54 c5! bxc5 55 b6!



47 f6! (not essential, but effective) **47...♗xf6 48 ♖f1 ♗h8 49 ♘xa7 ♖xa7 50 ♖h5 ♔e7 51 ♖xg5 ♖a8 52 h7 f6 53 ♖g8 ♖f8 54 c5 dxc5 55 ♔c4 ♔f7 56 d6 cxd6 57 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 58 ♔d5 1-0**

The successful year 1993 saw Karpov begin a new and final surge, enabling him to achieve several more outstanding results in events of world standard.

Suffocation of the Grünfeld

The solid set-up with g2-g3 became the 12th world champion's favourite weapon against the Grünfeld and the King's Indian Defences. Karpov was probably attracted by its universality and the fact that in the resulting positions Black cannot immediately display activity. He was especially successfully in symmetrical positions, when his opponent's tried to

neutralise White's initiative with the help of the c6- and d5-pawn wedge. I should remind you that Bronstein resorted to this in the 23rd game of his match with Botvinnik, and although he equalised fairly easily, in the end the world champion managed to turn a level endgame in his favour (*Volume 2, Game No.66*).

For a long time these positions were considered too tedious. The entire wisdom reduced to the fact that, if Black could manage to play ...♘f6-e4, the chances would supposedly be equal. Say, after 1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 ♗g7 4 ♗g2 c6 5 ♘f3 d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 0-0 0-0 8 ♘c3 he should play 8...♘e4! Correspondingly, White does better to play 8 ♘e5! immediately, retaining a slight initiative, although this would not seem to promise him anything serious. Nevertheless, for example, Petrosian against Korchnoi in the 4th game of their match in Odessa (1974) gained an advantage in this way and converted it into a win.

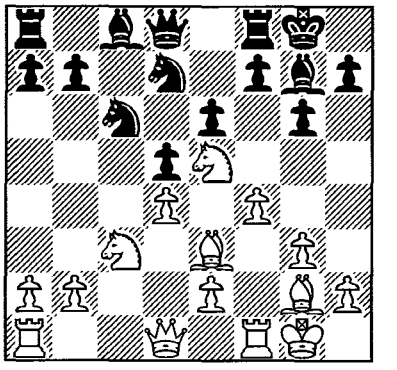
The main defence was considered to be 8...e6 9 0-0 ♘fd7, evicting the knight from e5. This is also what I played – twice in the 1986 return match (3rd and 13th games) and twice in the 1987 match (1st and 3rd games), each time gaining a draw (more details about this in Volume 7). But later Karpov successfully demonstrated that these symmetrical set-ups are by no means so harmless for Black, as at first sight. I will give two of his classic games against leading young grandmasters, where he demonstrated an unusually subtle understanding of these 'sterile' positions.

The first is from a super-tournament, dedicated to the 100th anniversary of Alekhine's birth (Moscow, autumn 1992). Here Karpov scored only 3½ out of 7, but for his game with Gata Kamsky the jury – consisting of Botvinnik, Lilienthal and Najdorf! – awarded him the prize 'for a win in Alekhine's style'.

True, one of the commentators on the game, grandmaster Mikhail Krasenkow, objected: 'To me this decision is questionable. Indeed, in the games of the first Russian world champion there are several examples of the play transferring from the queenside to the kingside. But here it was the other way round – the struggle switched from the kingside to the queenside. And this is Karpov's style!'

Game 100
A.Karpov-G.Kamsky
Moscow 1992, 6th round
Grünfeld Defence D79

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘f3 ♗g7 4 g3 c6 5 ♗g2 d5 6 cxd5 cxd5 7 ♘c3 0-0 8 ♘e5 e6 9 0-0 ♘fd7 10 f4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3



What should Black play now?

In the game Karpov-Timman (Euwe memorial, Amsterdam, May 1987) after 11...♘dxe5 12 fxe5 f6 13 exf6 ♖xf6 14 ♕d2 ♗d7 15 ♔h1 ♖xf1+ 16 ♖xf1 ♕e7 17 ♖d1! (a typical Karpov move, reinforcing the d4-pawn) 17...♖c8 18 a3 (another prophylactic move) 18...♗f6 19 ♗g1 ♗g5 20 ♕e1 ♘d8 21 e4! dxe4 22 ♕xe4 White gained a clear advantage.

Timman's play can probably be improved, but after 11...♘dxe5 Black apparently has no clear way to equalise. Other ways had to be sought...

11...♘b6?!

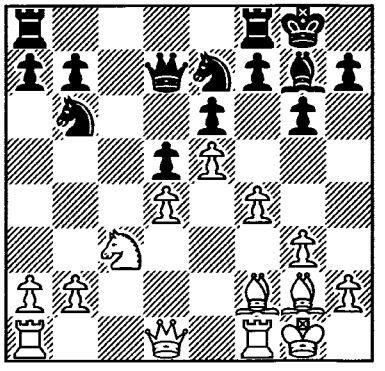
Kamsky follows the 1st game of the Seville match (1987). The ease with which I equalised apparently put Gata in an optimistic frame of mind. But he had not delved into the subtleties of the position. In fact, the development

plan carried out by Black is not sufficient for equality and it is better to drive away the knight immediately by 11...f6 (*Game No.101*).

12 ♗f2 ♗d7

After 12...f6 Black now has to reckon with 13 ♘xc6 bxc6 14 e4! It was because of the positional threat e2-e4 that in the 3rd game of the Seville match I preferred 12...♘e7.

13 e4! ♘e7 14 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 15 e5



White has made progress: he has advanced his backward pawn to e5 and gained space.

For the moment the position is closed and the strength of the two bishops is not felt. But White has the prospect of opening the game by the advance of his kingside pawns. Black, meanwhile, is hoping for counterplay on the queenside: to prevent the leap of the knight to c4, White will have to play b2-b3, and then Black can create pressure on the c-file. He is also hoping that White's activity will not lead to a rapid result, i.e. that the pawn storm (g3-g4, f4-f5) will not prove deadly.

15...♖ac8

I played 15...♖fc8 (this hardly changes anything, since all the same Black needs to double rooks on the c-file) 16 ♖c1 ♗f8. Here Karpov played rather cautiously – 17 ♗f3, and the chances became equal: 17...♖c7 18 b3 ♖ac8 19 ♕d2 ♘c6 20 ♕b2 a6 21 ♗e2 ♕e7. But immediately afterwards many pointed out the possibility of the energetic plan with g3-g4 and f4-f5!

16 ♖c1 a6

Karpov recommended 16...♖c7, but after 17 b3 ♖fc8 18 ♕d2 it is not clear what Black can do apart from the scheduled move 18...a6, leading to a position from the game.

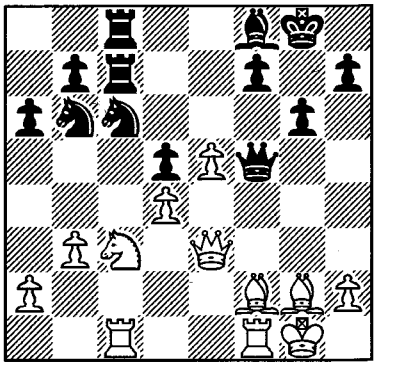
Perhaps he should have played 16...♘c4 17 b3 ♘a3 18 ♕d2 ♖c7 19 ♕b2 ♘b5, trying to exchange pieces, but even after 20 ♘e2 White has an enduring advantage thanks to his greater space and two bishops.

17 b3 ♖c7 18 ♕d2 ♖fc8 19 g4! ♗f8 20 ♕e3!

Karpov avoids the better endgame after 20 ♘e2 ♖xc1 21 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 22 ♘xc1 ♘c6 23 ♘d3, since he is aiming for more. Instead he makes an important prophylactic move, reducing the effectiveness of the counterplay on the c-file. For the essential manoeuvre of his bishop to a3 Black has to block this file with his knight, and then White succeeds in playing f4-f5 and removing his knight from c3 and his rook from the c-file, without in any way disrupting the coordination of his pieces.

20...♘c6 21 f5! ♗a3

Kamsky consistently carries out his plan, avoiding a possible sharpening of the play – 21...exf5 22 gxf5 ♕xf5.



Analysis diagram

White has many tempting possibilities, and the best is far from obvious. The d5-pawn is mined: 23 ♘xd5? ♘xd5 24 ♗xd5 ♘b4 25 ♖xc7? ♘xd5 and wins. Karpov initially gave 23 ♗h3 ♕h5 24 ♗xc8 ♗h6 25 ♕h3 (25 ♕g3

♗xc1 is hardly any better) 25...♗xc1 26 ♕xh5 gxh5 27 ♗xb7 but then he refuted his own recommendation in *New in Chess* by 27...♗b2! 28 ♗xc6? ♗xc3 and wins (therefore there only remains 28 ♘d1 ♗xd4 with equality).

23 ♘e2!?, another idea of Karpov, is more promising – the inclusion of the knight sharply strengthens the attack! Thus if 23...♕g4, then 24 ♔h1 with the threat of ♗h3, while 23...♕h5 24 ♘f4 ♕g4 25 ♔h1 ♗h6 runs into 26 ♗e1! ♘e7 27 ♖xc7 ♖xc7 28 ♗h3 ♕g5 (28...♗xf4 29 ♖xf4 ♕d1 30 ♖f1) 29 ♗a5 ♖c6 30 ♕e1! with the threat of 31 ♗xb6 ♖xb6 32 ♗d7 and ♕a5, and that is not all: after 30...♗f8 there is also 31 ♘d3!, while if 30...♗g7 31 ♗xb6 ♖xb6, then 32 ♕a5 ♖c6 33 ♕d8+ ♗f8 34 ♘xd5 ♔g7 35 ♘f4 is also good.

22 ♖cd1 ♘b4

A natural move, but for an instant it blocks the bishop's path to the kingside. 'The black pieces are tripping over one another's feet, which White exploits.' (Krasenkow)

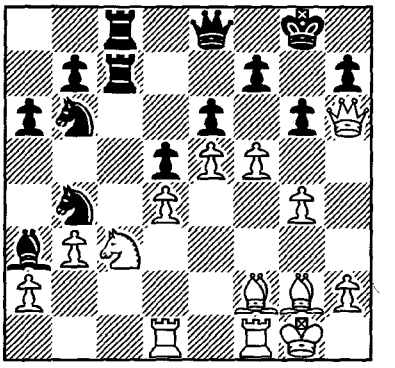
23 ♕h6!

23 ♘b1 is inaccurate on account of 23...♘c2! (Karpov), and the bishop at a3 succeeds in returning to its 'native' flank.

23...♕e8?!

Knight leaps – 23...♘d3?! 24 ♘xd5! ♘xd5 25 ♖xd3 or 23...♘c2 24 ♘e2 (Karpov) 24...♗f8 25 ♕h4 ♘b4 26 a3 ♖c2 27 ♘f4 ♘c6 28 ♖d3 – do not relieve Black of his difficulties.

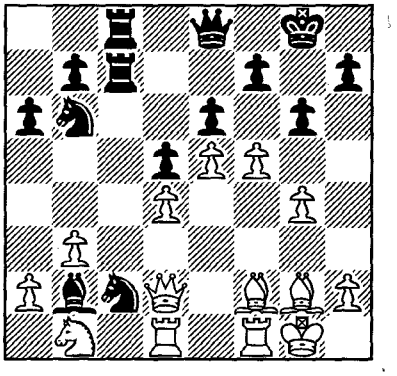
But the square for the queen (the guard of the f8-square and defender of the knight at b4) should have been chosen more accurately – 23...♕e7! 24 ♘b1 ♗b2, 'abolishing' 25 ♕d2. After 25 ♗h4 (if 25 a3 ♘c2 26 ♖d3 ♕f8 27 ♕d2 Black should decide on 27...♗xa3 28 ♘xa3 ♕xa3 – the knight is lost after 28...♘xa3? 29 fxe6 fxe6 30 ♕a5 ♖c6 31 ♗e1 ♕e7 32 ♗b4 – 29 ♖h3 ♕f8 in the hope that the storm will pass by) 25...♕f8 26 ♕d2 ♖c2 (Karpov) 27 ♕e3 or 26 ♕f4 ♖c2 (26...♘xa2? 27 fxe6 fxe6 28 ♕d2) 27 a3 White's chances are better, but the rook at c2 restricts his attacking impulses.



24 ♘b1! ♗b2 (now the bishop will for ever forget the way home) **25 ♕d2! ♘c2**

After 25...a5 26 a3! (26 ♕xb2?? ♖c2 27 ♕a3 ♖xa2) 26...♘c2 Karpov would have simply captured the pawn – 27 ♕xa5, while if 26...♖c2 he would have replied 27 ♕e1! ♕b5 28 axb4! ♖e2 29 ♕xe2 ♕xe2 30 bxa5 ♘d7 31 ♖d2, winning the ill-fated bishop.

Black's pieces have penetrated deeply into White's position, but it would look better if he had a rook at c2. The knight paralyses its own rooks, and this frees White's hands on the kingside.



26 ♔h1

'Black's counterplay is temporarily parried, and Karpov unhurriedly (in his best style) begins preparing for decisive action.' (Krasenkow)

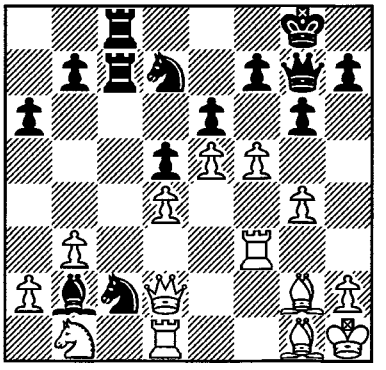
26...♕e7 27 ♗g1 ♘d7 28 ♖f3 ♕b4

'Black prevents the manoeuvre ♖h3 and ♕h6.' (Karpov)

29 ♕h6! ♕f8 30 ♕g5! ♕g7

White's queen has outplayed Black's, by luring it to g7. 30...♕d8 31 ♕d2 ♕e7 was more tenacious, continuing to look both ways, although after 32 ♖df1! White would most probably have given his opponent cause to regret his mistake on the 23rd move.

31 ♕d2!



An impressive queen pendulum! Black is tied up, his minor pieces are hopelessly stuck, and White can continue to prepare a decisive offensive.

31...b6 32 ♖df1 a5 33 h4 (threatening a possible h4-h5-h6) **33...♘b4**

Kamsky has nevertheless ensured the invasion of his rook at c2 (34 ♕xb2? ♖c2), but in the meantime White has made progress on the other side of the board, and this belated activity is no longer dangerous for him (in the end it even played into his hands!).

34 a3 ♖c2 35 ♕f4 ♘c6 36 ♗h3! ♘d8 (36...♖e2 37 ♘c3!) **37 ♗e3 b5 38 ♖3f2!**

A completely unexpected decision. Seeing that Black is fairly solid on the kingside, Karpov finds a paradoxical plan: exploiting the desperate position of the bishop at b2, he opens a second front in the place where nearly all the black pieces are crowded – the queenside. After the exchange of the rooks – the opponent's only pieces with any fighting capability! – the white queen breaks into the enemy position via the c-file, while the black queen is stuck on the kingside.

38...b4 39 axb4 axb4 40 ♖xc2 ♖xc2 41 ♖f2! ♖xf2 42 ♕xf2 ♗a3

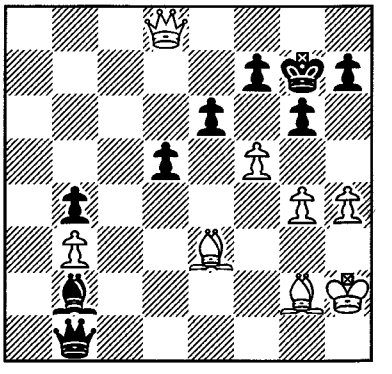
In the event of 42...♗c3 43 f6 ♕f8 44 ♕c2 Black has to go into a hopeless endgame a pawn down (Karpov), since 44...♗e1 is even worse on account of 45 ♕c7 ♕e8 46 ♗f1 ♘f8 47 ♕e7! ♕d7 48 ♗h6! 'An amusing finish! But at a3 the bishop is completely shut out of the game.' (Krasenkow)

43 ♕c2 ♘xe5?!

This loses by force. 43...♘b8 would have allowed Black to avoid immediate losses, although, of course, after 44 f6 ♕f8 45 ♗f1 (Krasenkow) or 45 ♘d2 followed by ♘f3 and ♗f1 (Karpov) he can no longer hold out.

44 dxe5 ♕xe5 45 ♕c8! ♕e4+ 46 ♗g2 ♕xb1+ 47 ♔h2 ♗b2 48 ♕xd8+ ♔g7

And here Karpov crowns his strategic masterpiece with a pretty mating attack.



49 f6+! ♗xf6 50 ♗h6+! ♔xh6 51 ♕xf6 ♕c2 52 g5+ ♔h5 53 ♔g3!

This sort of thing happens more often in studies. It was not yet too late to go wrong: 53 ♔h3? ♕f5+.

53...♕c7+ 54 ♔h3 1-0

Mate is inevitable.

In 1993, when Short and I 'slammed the door' and against all expectations Karpov returned to the throne, FIDE decided to set its champion an additional exam, by obliging him

to begin in the new cycle with a semi-final match of 10 games. And this match took place in February 1995 in the Indian town of Sanghi Nagar.

Karpov's opponent was the talented 26-year-old grandmaster Boris Gelfand – another bright star from the late 1980s-early 1990s, fully comparable with Anand and Ivanchuk. In an interview after my fifth match with Karpov (1990) I even offered the opinion that in the next qualifying cycle the most dangerous opponent for the ex-champion would in fact be Gelfand. However, it so happened that they met three years later, after Boris had already won his second Interzonal tournament (1993) and then defeated Adams and Kramnik in matches.

Gelfand must have pinned great hopes on this semi-final match. On his side was a 17-year age difference, which could become a significant factor, in view of the difficult climatic conditions in India... After two draws at the start, he took the lead by winning the 3rd game in a Caro-Kann with 3 e5 – Karpov has always had difficult relations with this variation.

But in the very next game, the 4th, Karpov recouped his losses in his favourite symmetrical 'Grünfeld'. On this occasion the struggle was more complicated and double-edged, than in his encounter with Kamsky.

Game 101
A.Karpov-B.Gelfand
FIDE Candidates Match,
Sanghi Nagar 1995, 4th round
Grünfeld Defence D79

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 g3 c6 4 ♗g2 d5 5 cxd5 cxd5 6 ♘f3 ♗g7 7 ♘e5 0-0 8 ♘c3 e6

In Linares 1991 Gelfand chose 8...♗f5 9 0-0 ♘e4 against Karpov, and after 10 ♗e3?! (in the game with Korchnoi mentioned at the start of the chapter, Petrosian played more actively – 10 ♗f4) 10...♘xc3 11 bxc3 ♘c6 White did not gain any advantage, but... he won the drawn double rook endgame that was soon reached. It is amusing that in this same set-up Fischer won a similar endgame against Geller with Black (Palma de Mallorca Interzonal 1970).

9 0-0 ♘fd7 10 f4 ♘c6 11 ♗e3 f6

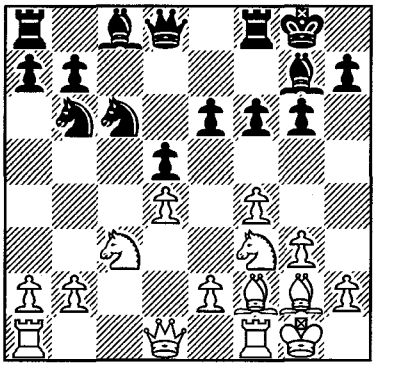
The main continuation (11...♘b6?! – *Game No.100*).

12 ♘f3

Karpov-Timman (4th matchgame, Kuala Lumpur 1990) went 12 ♘d3 (12 ♘xc6 bxc6 is equal, Giorgadze-Khuzman, Uzhgorod 1987) 12...♘b6 13 b3 ♕e7?! 14 a4 ♗d7 15 ♗c1! ♖fd8 16 e3 ♗e8 17 ♗a3 ♕f7 18 ♖c1 ♗f8 19 ♗xf8 ♕xf8 20 g4! with the initiative for White, but then Black improved: 13...♗d7 14 ♗f2 ♕e7 15 ♖c1 ♖ad8 16 ♖c2 ♗e8 with equality (Karpov-Timman, 12th matchgame, Holland/Indonesia 1993).

12...♘b6 (12...f5 13 ♘e5 ♘b6 14 b3 ♗d7 15 ♕d3 ♘c8 16 ♗c1! led to some advantage for White in Kasparov-Topalov, 'Advanced chess', 2nd matchgame, Leon 1998) **13 ♗f2**

13 b3 ♗d7 14 ♗c1 f5 15 ♗a3 has also been tried (Bologan-Leko, Dortmund 2004).



13...♗d7

A novelty, although 13...f5 (preventing e2-e4) 14 ♘e5 ♗d7 is sounder, when Black has usually succeeded in extinguishing the opponent's slight initiative: 15 ♕d2 ♘c8 16 ♕e3 ♔h8 17 ♖fd1 ♘d6 18 b3 ♖c8 19 ♖ac1 ♗e8 20 ♗e1 ♗f6 (Karpov-Kasparov, 13th match-

game, London/Leningrad 1986), 15 ♖c1 ♕e7 (Bareev-Leko, Sarajevo 1999), or 15 g4 ♕e7 16 gxf5 gxf5 17 ♔h1 ♔h8 18 ♕d3 ♗f6 19 ♕h3 ♖g8, then ...♖g7 and ...♖ag8 (Bologan-Leko, Dortmund rapidplay 2004).

However, such play is precisely in Karpov's style: he can engage in the gradual strengthening of his position, seeking weaknesses in the opponent's camp, and manoeuvre in the expectation of some incautious action.

14 e4 dxe4 15 ♘xe4 ♘d5

Having gained secure control of the d5-square, Gelfand was hoping possibly to exploit the weakness of the isolated d4-pawn. But the defects of Black's position are also obvious: a weak e6-pawn and passive bishop at g7 which is hard to activate, since ...f6-f5 will weaken the e5-square.

16 ♖e1 (16 ♘c5 b6 17 ♘xd7 ♕xd7 is unfavourable for White – Ftacnik) **16...b6 17 ♘c3!**

Now that the prospect of going to c5 has disappeared, there is nothing for the knight to do on e4 and its return to c3 is perfectly logical – the struggle for the d5-square!

It is doubtful whether the attempt to put immediate pressure on the e6-pawn by 17 ♗h3 was any better, since Black defends his weakness without any trouble: 17...♕c7 18 ♖c1 ♖ac8 19 ♘c3 ♕d6. But in combination with pressure on d5, this threat will be unpleasant, since it is not so easy for Black to manoeuvre in restricted space.

17...♘ce7 18 ♕b3 (18 ♗h3 ♘c7 Karpov) **18...a5**

Now, after the natural 18...♖c8, 19 ♗h3! was rather good: 19...♖c6 (or 19...f5 20 ♘g5 ♖c6 21 ♗g2) 20 ♖ac1 (Ftacnik). Not wanting to endure the queen at b3, Gelfand decides on a weakening of his pawn structure.

19 a3

Karpov never liked to weaken his pawns without necessity. Thus here he prevents the advance ...a5-a4-a3, although after 19 ♗h3!? a4 20 ♕c2 ♕c8 (Ftacnik) 21 ♕e2 a3 22 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 23 ♖ac1 ♕e8 24 b3 Black's problems would have remained unresolved: 24...f5 25 ♗g2 ♖c8 26 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 27 ♘e5, and if 24...♖c8, then not 25 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 26 ♗xe6+ ♗xe6 27 ♕xe6+ ♕xe6 28 ♖xe6 ♖c8 with counterplay, but 25 ♖c4!, retaining pressure.

19...a4 20 ♕d1

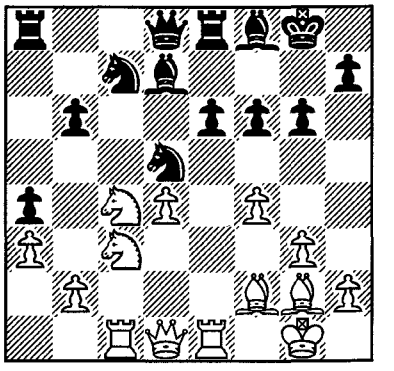
If 20 ♕a2 ♘xc3 21 bxc3 b5 (with equality – Karpov) 22 ♘d2 ♖c8 23 ♘e4 the chances are with White, but after 20...♖c8 21 ♖ac1 ♖c6 (Ftacnik) 22 ♘d2 ♗e8 Black succeeds in defending his weak pawns: 23 ♘c4 ♗f7, and if 23 ♘xd5 exd5 24 b3 (an attempt to exploit the weakness at b6), then 24...♖xc1 25 ♖xc1 g5 is possible, with counterplay on the kingside.

20...♘c7

Gelfand replaces the blockading knight: the one from e7 will go to d5, so that the other can defend the e6-pawn from c7. Defending this pawn with the queen leaves White with the advantage: 20...♕b8 21 ♗h3 ♕d6 22 ♘e4 ♕c6 23 ♖c1 ♕b5 24 ♖c2 ♘f5 25 ♘c3! (the struggle revolves around the d5-square) 25...♕c6 26 ♘xd5 ♕xd5 27 ♗g2 ♕d6 28 ♘d2, preparing a breakthrough in the centre.

20...♘c7 should not be criticised: Black still retains an acceptable game. But it is instructive to observe how Karpov seeks resources, manoeuvring on the central squares.

21 ♖c1 ♘ed5 22 ♘d2! ♖e8 (after 22...b5 the knight takes a different route – 23 ♘de4) **23 ♘c4! ♗f8**

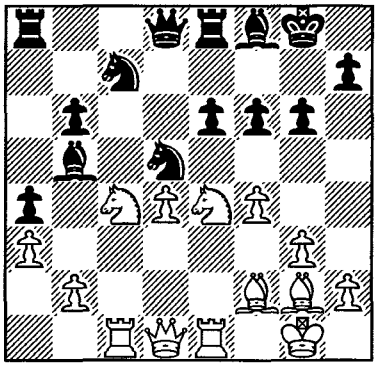


24 ♘e4

Karpov unexpectedly changes plan: since he does not consider it useful to exchange his knight at c3, he temporarily stops besieging the d5-point. Even so, the logical intensification of this siege by 24 ♘e3 would have set Black the most serious problems: 24...♗c6?! 25 ♘cxd5! ♗xd5 26 ♘xd5 ♘xd5 27 ♕c2! (stronger than Karpov's recommendation 27 ♖c6) with an obvious advantage, or 24...♘xc3 25 ♖xc3 ♖a7 (anaesthetic, but after Ftacnik's 25...♖c8 there follows 26 ♕c2, and it is not easy for Black to disentangle himself) 26 h4 with the initiative for White.

In the game, by contrast, the retention of the d5-outpost enabled Black to maintain a sound defence. But, on the other hand, with a larger number of pieces on the board Gelfand also has to solve more difficult problems. In the end Karpov's idea proved justified, since in the subsequent manoeuvring Black did not act in the best way.

24...♗b5

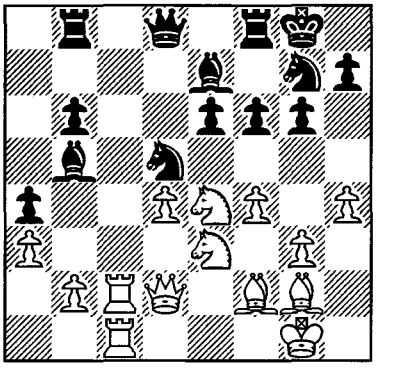


25 ♖e2! ♗e7 26 ♖ec2 ♖b8 (♘xb6 was threatened) **27 ♕d2 ♖f8?!**

Black begins what appears to quite a good regrouping: the rook vacates a square for the knight, which goes to g7, in order to cover the king and hinder a possible advance of the h-pawn. But this plan has an obvious drawback: it weakens Black's control of d5. Gelfand's desire to move his knight from c7, where it under 'X-ray' attack by the white rooks, is understandable, but in my opinion 27...♕d7 was clearly preferable – after 28 h4 he could have played either 28...♖ec8 29 h5 ♘e8 30 hxg6 hxg6 31 ♘e3 ♗c6, or even 28...h5. That is, thanks to his control of d5 Black could nevertheless have hoped to obtain a normal game.

28 h4! ♘e8?! (consistent, although 28...♕d7 was again better – even with a loss of tempo!)

29 ♘e3 ♘g7



30 ♘c3!

Returning to the attack on the d5-point. An exchange sacrifice also merits serious consideration: 30 ♘xd5!? exd5 31 ♘c3 ♗c4 (after Ftacnik's move 31...♗c6 White has the strong reply 32 ♕e2!, when it is hard for Black to hold his a4- and d5-pawns) 32 ♘xa4 ♗b3 33 ♘c3 (Karpov), and if 33...♗xc2, then 34 ♖xc2! In any event White will pick up the d5-pawn and have excellent compensation. But Karpov wants to achieve more!

30...♘xc3

Black is forced to give up his outpost. In the event of 30...♗c6 31 ♘cxd5 ♗xd5 32 ♘xd5 exd5 33 ♕d3 b5 34 ♕f3 (Ftacnik) he would have lost a very important pawn.

31 ♖xc3 g5!?

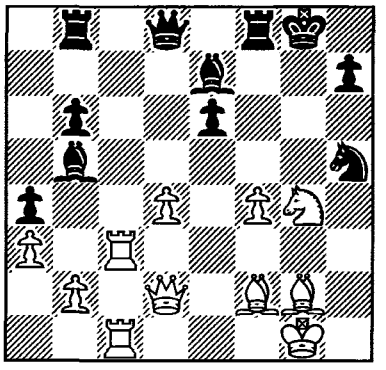
Realising that the quiet development of events does not promise him anything, Boris decides to open up the play on the kingside.

32 hxg5

Now the dangerous breakthrough 32 d5!? is parried by 32...gxf4 33 gxf4 ♔h8, and the weakening of the white king gives Black counter-chances.

32...fxg5 33 ♘g4 gxf4 34 gxf4 ♗d6?!

Ftacnik recommended attacking the f4-pawn in another way – 34...♘h5!? This would in fact have set White somewhat more difficult problems.



Analysis diagram

35 f5!? exf5 36 ♕h6! (but not 36 ♘h6+ ♔g7 37 ♖c7 ♔g6!, when White has nothing better than a draw: 38 ♘g4 fxg4 39 ♗e4+ ♔f7 40 ♕h6 ♘f6 41 ♗xh7 ♖h8 42 ♕g6+) looks highly promising. However Black plays, things will be difficult for him:

1) 36...♘g7 37 ♘e5 ♖f6 (after 37...♗g5 there is the strong reply 38 ♗d5+! ♕xd5 39 ♕xg5 ♕d6 40 ♖c7 ♕f6 41 ♕g2 ♔h8 42 ♗h4 ♕h6 43 ♗g5 ♕d6 44 ♗f4 ♕f6 45 ♖f7 and wins) 38 ♕h1! (the bishop takes aim at d5, and the rook at h3) 38...♔h8 39 ♖h3 h5 (39...♕g8 40 ♗h4) 40 ♖xh5+ ♘xh5 41 ♕xh5+ ♔g8 42 ♕g5+ ♔f8 43 ♖c3 etc.;

2) 36...fxg4 37 ♕xh5 ♗e8 (37...♗g5 38 ♖c7 ♗d3 39 ♕xg4 ♗g6 40 ♖1c6, and Black cannot hold out; one of the threats is 41 ♖xg6+ hxg6 42 ♕e6+ ♔h8 43 ♕h3+) 38 ♕xg4+ ♔h8 39 ♗g3 ♗d6 40 ♖c7! ♗g6 41 ♖d7, and the queen has to be given up: 41...♗xg3 42 ♖xd8 ♗f2+ 43 ♔h1 ♖bxd8 44 d5. White has an obvious advantage, but the battle is still continuing.

The best defence after 35 f5 is to sacrifice the queen in a different way: 35...♗g5! 36 ♗e3 ♖xf5 37 ♗xg5 ♖xg5 38 ♖c8 ♖xg4 39 ♖xd8+ ♖xd8 40 ♕h6 ♘f4 41 ♔h1 ♖f8 42 ♗e4 ♘g6 – here White's winning chances are not so great.

However, rather than the 'Tal-like' 35 f5 Karpov would probably have preferred 35 ♖f3 (Ftacnik) 35...♗d6 36 ♘h6+ ♔g7 37 f5 with an attack, or 35...♘f6 36 ♘h6+ (36 ♘e5 is weaker: 36...♘e4 37 ♕e3 ♘xf2 38 ♖xf2 ♗h4 39 ♖f3 ♖b7! and ...♖g7) 36...♔h8 37 ♕e3 with an obvious advantage in the event of 37...♗d7 38 ♕e5 ♖c8 39 ♖xc8 ♕xc8 40 ♖c3 ♕e8 41 ♖c7. The pawn sacrifice 37...♗d6 38 ♕xe6 ♕d7 does not give Black full counterplay: 39 f5 ♖be8 40 ♕xd7 ♗xd7 41 ♗g3 ♗xg3 42 ♖xg3.

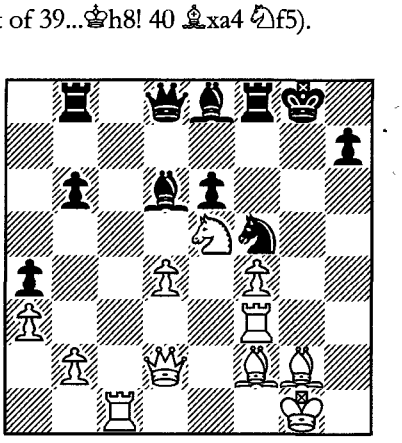
35 ♖f3! ♗e8

Not even trying to exploit the open g-file – 35...♔h8. And indeed, after the thematic 36 d5! (36 ♘e5 ♘f5 37 d5 is weaker because of 37...♕f6!, but not 37...♗xe5 38 fxe5 ♕xd5 39 ♕xd5 exd5 40 ♗h3 ♗d7 41 ♖c7 ♗e6 42 ♖c6 ♗d7 43 ♖f6 ♖xf6 44 exf6 ♖g8+ 45 ♔h2 ♖g5 46 ♗e3 ♖h5 47 ♔g1 and ♗g4!) 36...exd5 37 f5 White's threats quickly mount.

The aim of 35...♗e8 is obvious: to seize the initiative after 36 d5? ♗h5 37 ♗h3 e5.

36 ♘e5 ♘f5

Black has to do something to oppose the d4-d5 advance, but what? After 36...♗xe5 37 fxe5 ♖xf3 38 ♗xf3 his position is difficult: if 38...♗h5, then 39 ♗g2! is correct (Ftacnik's recommendation 39 ♗c6, with the idea of 39...b5 40 d5 exd5 41 ♗a7!, is dubious on account of 39...♔h8! 40 ♗xa4 ♘f5).



37 d5!

The decisive breakthrough at this once well-fortified point. The position is opened to White's obvious advantage.

37...♗xe5 (37...exd5 38 ♕xd5+ is no better) **38 fxe5 ♖b7**

After 38...exd5 (38...♕xd5? 39 ♖g3+) Karpov gave 39 e6. But it is also possible to play 39 ♖f4!? (Ftacnik's move 39 ♖d3 is unclear in view of 39...d4, when 40 ♗xd4?! ♗b5 is bad for White) 39...d4 (39...♘e7 40 ♖xf8+ ♔xf8 41 ♗h4 Ftacnik) 40 ♗xd4 ♘xd4 41 ♖xd4 ♕e7 42 e6, or even stronger 40 ♖f1! Now if 40...♕g5 White wins by 41 ♗h4 ♕g6 42 ♔h2, and after 40...♗b5 41 ♗h4 ♕d7 by the diverting 42 e6!, when in the event of 42...♕xe6 the black queen no longer defends the d4-pawn: 43 ♖g4+ ♔h8 44 ♖xf5, or 43...♘g7 44 ♕xd4 ♕d7 45 ♗d5+ ♔h8 46 ♗f6.

It may seem that the manoeuvre of the rook to g7 will give Black some chances, but Karpov convincingly demonstrates that this is an illusion.

39 ♔h2! ♖g7 (39...exd5 40 ♖f4! ♖d7 41 ♖f1 etc.) **40 ♗h3 ♗h5**

After 40...♗g6 not only 41 d6 (Ftacnik) is strong, but also 41 ♖c6!, and Black's position is unenviable.

41 ♖f4 ♔h8?!

Even so, 41...♗g6 would have offered better practical chances, despite 42 d6 (Karpov) or 42 ♖c6!

42 ♗xf5!

Here White does not have to worry about parting with his king's main defender: he wins the exchange, and Black's threats are easily parried.

42...exf5 (42...♖xf5 43 ♗h4!) **43 ♗h4 ♕e8** (43...♕b8 44 d6!) **44 ♗f6 ♗g4 45 ♗xg7+ ♔xg7 46 ♖c7+ ♔h8 47 e6!**

Finally allowing the opponent to drive the king into the centre, but...

47...♕h5+ 48 ♔g1 ♕g5 49 ♔f2! ♕h4+ 50 ♔e3 1-0

White's passed pawns have become totally irresistible.

This monumental game had a decisive influence on the further course of the match: by winning in good style, Karpov not only levelled the scores, but also undermined Gelfand's belief in his ultimate success. After a draw in the 5th game, Boris lost the 6th, and after it also the 7th – with White in a Queen's Indian Defence. When he sealed his 61st move, he still retained hopes of saving himself in a very interesting bishop endgame, but on the resumption he committed an imperceptible error as early as the 63rd move, and Karpov created a genuine Sanghi Nagar study! Later he was to say: 'This adjourned position was the most complicated in my career.'

After gaining a draw in the 8th game and also winning the 9th, Karpov won the match ahead of schedule by the convincing score 6-3. Now he faced a final encounter with Gata Kamsky, who had crushed Valery Salov in the other semi-final...

'Tournament of his Life'

When talking about Karpov's upsurge after his return to the FIDE throne, everyone immediately remembers his phenomenal triumph in Linares 1994. However, before this is described, it should be mentioned that no less successful for him in the creative sense was the 1992 tournament in Biel, which took place just three months after his ill-fated match with Short. We are already familiar with one game from there (*Game No.96*), and here is another striking example.

Game 102
A.Karpov-A.Beliavsky
Biel 1992, 5th round
Ruy Lopez C95

1 e4

In the 1990s Karpov would mainly 'serve from the right' only against a specific opponent. Thus in the given instance he probably took into account Beliavsky's predilection for the Breyer Variation, which at one time he

himself used to happily play for both sides.

1...e5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♗b5 a6 4 ♗a4 ♘f6 5 0-0 ♗e7 6 ♖e1 b5 7 ♗b3 d6 8 c3 0-0 9 h3 ♘b8 10 d4 (10 d3 – *Game No.51*) **10...♘bd7 11 ♘bd2 ♗b7 12 ♗c2 ♖e8 13 a4**

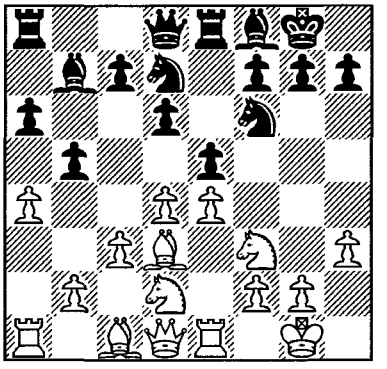
This move, which first occurred back in 1964 in a game between two Moscow masters, became internationally known only nine years later (cf. the following note). But its popularity began to grow starting in 1988, although the main line remained 13 ♘f1 (13 b4 – *Game No.70*) 13...♗f8 14 ♘g3 (*Volume 4, Game No.107*).

13...♗f8

The game Keres-Reshevsky (Petropolis Interzonal 1973) went 13...c5 14 ♘f1 (14 d5! is stronger) 14...♗f8 (14...d5!?) 15 ♘g3 g6 16 b3 ♗g7 17 dxe5 with a quick draw, but after 17 d5! the traditional 'Spanish torture' would have awaited Black.

14 ♗d3

Hoping to restrict the opponent's actions by pressure on the b5-pawn.



14...c6

The position of the bishop at d3 gives Black the opportunity for a freeing advance in the centre: 14...b4 15 a5 d5!? 16 exd5 exd4 17 ♖xe8 ♕xe8 18 c4 ♘c5 (Khalifman-Beliavsky, Leningrad 1990). The recent game Haznedaroglu-Short (Izmir 2004) confirmed that this is perfectly acceptable for Black: 19 ♘b3 ♘xd3 20 ♕xd3 c6 21 dxc6 ♕xc6 22 ♘bxd4 ♕c7 with sufficient counterplay for the pawn.

Another version of the pawn sacrifice – 14...exd4 15 cxd4 c5 (Spassky-Karpov, Tilburg 1983) – did not become established in tournament play.

15 b3

After the standard 15 ♘f1 Beliavsky twice successfully solved his opening problems by 15...d5 16 ♗g5 dxe4 17 ♖xe4 ♗e7 – against Balashov (56th USSR Championship, Odessa 1989) and Anand (Linares 1992).

15...g6

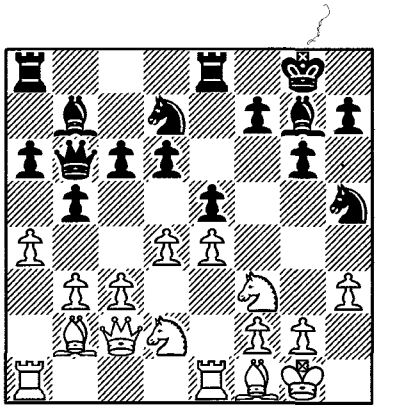
Here 15...d5?! leads to the loss of a pawn after 16 exd5, for example: 16...♘xd5 17 dxe5 ♘c5 (17...♘xc3? 18 ♕c2) 18 ♕c2 ♘xd3 19 ♕xd3 b4 (19...♘f4 20 ♕f5) 20 c4 ♘c3 21 ♕c2! c5 22 ♗b2 etc.

16 ♕c2 ♗g7

16...♖c8!? is interesting: 17 ♗b2 ♘h5 (it is too early for 17...exd4?! 18 cxd4 d5 19 e5 ♘h5 on account of 20 e6! ♖xe6 21 ♖xe6 fxe6 22 ♗xg6 hxg6 23 ♕xg6+ ♘g7 24 ♘g5 ♘f6 25 ♕f7+ and ♕xb7) 18 ♗f1 exd4! 19 cxd4 (19 ♘xd4 ♗g7 20 ♘4f3 is equal) 19...d5, and after 20 e5 b4! Black even seizes the initiative (Bezgodov-Balashov, Perm 1997).

17 ♗b2 ♘h5 18 ♗f1 ♕b6

Up till now both sides have been manoeuvring in accordance with time-tested prescriptions.

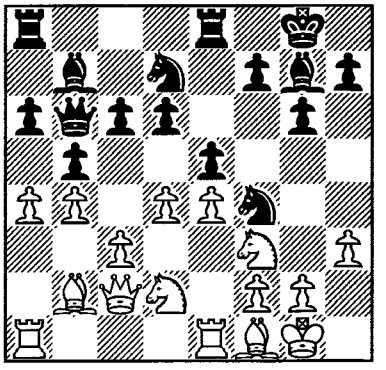


19 b4!

Apparently, Karpov had this novelty in mind when he played 1 e4. White seizes space

on the queenside, prepares c3-c4, and above all restricts Black's activity. This is typical of Karpov, who in almost every game was able to find an arrangement of his pieces which would enable him to restrict the opponent's possibilities and at the same time unhurriedly strengthen his own position.

19...♘f4



20 dxe5

It was possible to maintain the tension – 20 ♘b3 ♖ac8 21 ♖ad1 ♘e6 22 ♘a5 ♗a8 23 ♕b3 ♖cd8 24 ♕a2 (A.Sokolov-Notkin, Elista 1994), but Karpov prefers to clarify the situation. The point of this is revealed slightly later.

20...♘xe5

If 20...dxe5 21 c4 (Karpov) 21...bxa4, then 22 c5 ♕xb4 23 ♗a3 ♕a5 24 ♘c4 ♕c7 25 ♘d6 is good for White, or else 22 ♕xa4, and it is hard for Black to prevent a subsequent bind: 22...a5? will not do on account of 23 bxa5! ♕xb2 24 ♖eb1 ♕c3 25 ♖c1!

21 ♘xe5 dxe5

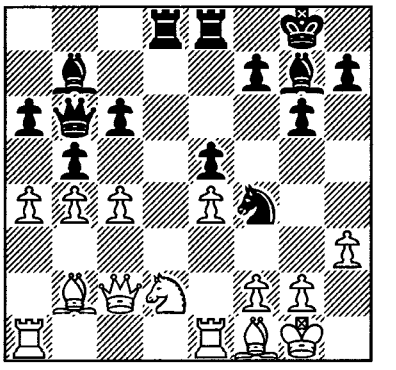
Black is forced to shut in his bishop, since he fails to equalise after 21...♗xe5 22 ♘f3 (22 c4!?) 22...♗g7 23 ♕d2 (Karpov).

22 c4

In contrast to its opposite number, the bishop at b2 becomes active, and Black is faced with solving some difficult strategic problems.

22...♖ad8

Activating the bishop at b7 by 22...c5 is unfavourable in view of 23 cxb5! cxb4 24 a5 ♕f6 25 b6. Beliavsky is concerned about the uncertain state of his queenside pawns, and he provokes c4-c5, stabilising the pawn structure.



23 axb5!

After 23 c5 ♕c7 24 ♘b3 ♗c8 things would have been easier for Black than in the game. Karpov tries to achieve more, by exploiting the weakness of the b5-pawn.

23...axb5?!

Hoping to find work for the bishop on the c8-h3 diagonal, but this hope is not destined to be realised. 23...cxb5! was bolder, opening up the b7-bishop and enlivening the play. In this case playing against the weakness of the b5-pawn after 24 cxb5 axb5 promises White little. Karpov recommended 24 g3 ♘e6 25 c5 or immediately 24 c5! ♕f6 25 ♖e3 – in my opinion, 25 ♖a3 is more accurate, while if 24...♕e6, then 25 ♘f3!, inhibiting ...f7-f5 (25...f5? 26 ♘g5 ♕e7 27 ♕b3+ ♘e6 28 c6) and maintaining the initiative after 25...h6 26 ♖a3.

24 ♖a5! (now Black has no time to think about the future of his bishop at b7) **24...♗f8**

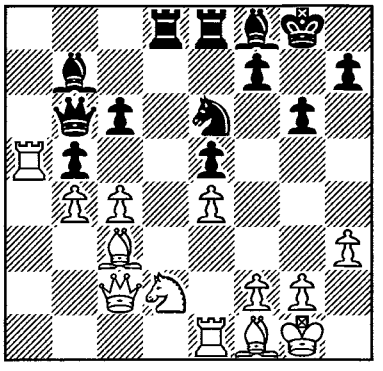
After 24...bxc4 25 ♘xc4 ♕c7 (25...♕xb4?! 26 ♖b1!) Karpov suggested 26 g3 with a '±' sign, apparently reckoning that 26...♘e6 simply loses a pawn: 27 ♗xe5 ♗xe5 28 ♖xe5. However, after 28...c5 29 bxc5 ♘d4 (29...f6 is sharper: 30 ♖xe6! ♖xe6 31 ♕b3, when 31...♗d5? 32 ♖e3 ♖b8 33 ♕a2 ♖a8 34 exd5! ♖xa2 35 dxe6 ♕e7 36 c6! is bad for Black, but after 31...♔g7! 32 ♘d6 by a counter-sacrifice

of the exchange he can obtain the same endgame with four pawns against three on one wing) 30 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 31 ♕d3 ♕xc5 32 ♘d2 ♖d8 33 ♕e3 ♘e6 it is not easy for White to convert his extra pawn.

Therefore 26 ♕b3!, continuing to build up the initiative, is preferable, for example: 26...♗c8 27 ♖ea1 ♗e6 28 ♕e3 f6 29 ♖a7 ♕b8 30 ♘a5!? (30 ♘xe5!? is also interesting: 30...fxe5 31 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 32 ♕xf4 ♗f7 33 ♖a5, or 30...♘xh3+ 31 gxh3 fxe5 32 ♕c5) 30...♕xb4 31 ♗c3 ♕f8 32 ♘xc6 ♖d7 33 ♖xd7 ♗xd7 34 ♗b4 ♕f7 35 ♖a7.

25 ♗c3! (but not 25 c5? ♗xc5) **25...♘e6!**

It was on this move that Black was pinning all his hopes. Capturing on c4 would have led to the loss of the e5-pawn without any compensation.



26 ♘f3!

If 26 cxb5, then 26...♘d4!, initiating active play in the centre at the cost of a pawn. It is true that after 27 ♗xd4 both 27...♕xd4 28 ♘f3! ♕xb4 29 ♖a7 (29...♖e7 30 ♖b1! ♕d6 31 b6) and 27...♖xd4 28 ♘c4 ♕d8 (28...♕c7 29 b6 ♕b8 30 ♕c3) 29 bxc6 ♗xb4 30 cxb7 (Karpov) are insufficient for Black. But 27...exd4! 28 ♘c4 d3! 29 ♕xd3! would lead by force to one of the two following endings, where Black retains real chances of saving the game:

1) 29...♖xd3 30 ♘xb6 ♗xb4 31 ♖a7! (Karpov) 31...♖a3 32 ♖xa3 ♗xa3 33 ♘c4 ♗c5 34 ♖c1 cxb5 35 ♘a5 ♖c8 36 ♘xb7 ♗xf2+ 37 ♔xf2 ♖xc1 38 ♗xb5;

2) 29...♕xa5 30 bxa5 ♖xd3 31 ♗xd3 cxb5 32 ♘b6 ♗b4 33 ♖a1 ♗c3 34 ♖a2 ♖e6 35 ♘d5 ♗xd5 36 exd5 ♖a6 37 d6! ♖xd6 38 ♗xb5 ♖d1+ 39 ♔h2 ♖a1 40 ♖xa1 ♗xa1 41 a6 ♗d4 etc.

Karpov found a more interesting possibility, involving the strategic plan of shutting in the bishop at b7 and exploiting his spatial advantage. At the same time Black even acquires a passed pawn in the centre, supported by the rook at d8, and the rook at e8 comes into play. But Karpov calculated that the activity of the black pieces would be temporary, whereas White's activity, in view of the threat of advancing the e-pawn and opening up the position of the black king, would be far more long-term and dangerous.

26...♘d4 27 ♗xd4 exd4 28 c5 ♕c7

For complete happiness Black only needs to make one more move – ...♗c8, and it is hard to imagine that he will not in fact manage to make it.

29 ♖a7! ♕b8

To inhibit the advance of the white e-pawn, Beliavsky tries to activate his d-pawn. In fact 29...♗g7 30 e5 (Karpov) would have been quite acceptable for Black: 30...♕b8 31 ♕a2 ♖d5 (31...d3? 32 e6), and the invasion 32 ♕a5 ♖e7 33 ♕b6 is not fatal for him – 33...d3 34 ♖d1 d2 35 g3 (it is no better to play 35 ♖xd2 ♖xd2 36 ♘xd2 ♗xe5, and if 37 ♘e4?, then 37...♗h2+ 38 ♔h1 ♖xe4 39 ♖xb7 ♕f4) 35...♕c7 36 ♖xd2 ♖xd2 37 ♘xd2 ♗xe5 38 ♘b3 (or 38 ♕xc7 ♖xc7 39 ♘b3 ♗c3 40 ♘a5 ♗xb4 41 ♘xb7 ♔g7 42 ♖a6 with equality) 38...♕d7! 39 ♘a5 ♗xg3! 40 ♘xb7 ♗xf2+ with perpetual check.

However, White would not have been obliged to force events, and 30 ♗d3! ♖a8 31 ♖xa8 ♗xa8 32 ♖a1 would leave him with an obvious positional advantage.

30 ♕a2 d3

Consistent, although a more restrained course of action was still possible: 30...♗g7 31 ♗d3 ♖d7 32 ♕a5 ♗f6 33 g3 ♗d8 34 ♕a2

with advantage to White.

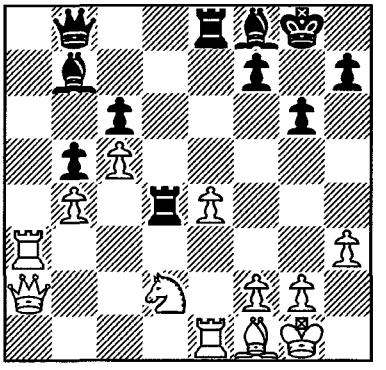
31 ♖a3! (31 e5?! was weaker: 31...d2 32 ♖d1 ♗h6! Karpov) **31...d2**

With this and his next move Beliavsky maintains material equality, but this leads to a rapid collapse. It would seem that, by abandoning the pawn to its fate – 31...♗g7!? 32 ♖xd3 (32 ♗xd3 ♕f4) 32...♖xd3 33 ♗xd3 ♗c8, he could have made things much harder for his opponent.

32 ♘xd2 ♖d4?

This essentially loses by force! The best practical chance was again to try and set up a defence a pawn down: 32...♗c8 33 ♘f3 ♗e6.

Now too, at first sight, things are not so bad for Black: a pawn is attacked, his queen wants to leap to f4, and his bishop has not lost hope of reaching e6. But Karpov's next move shows that these are not real intentions, but belated dreams.



33 e5! ♖xb4 (not 33...♖xe5? 34 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 because of the fork 35 ♘f3) **34 e6!**

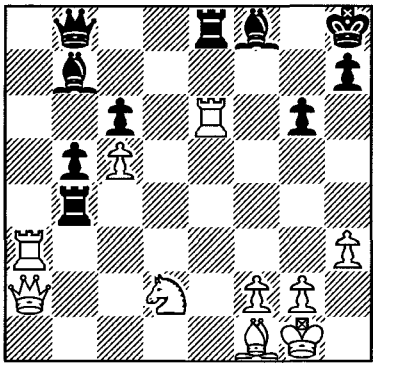
Very energetic. The swift invasion of the opponent's position brings White an impressive win.

34 ♘e4 appears stronger, when if 34...♖e6 (34...♕xe5? 35 ♘g5!) White has the paralysing 35 ♘d6. But Black gives up the exchange – 34...♖xe4! 35 ♖xe4 ♖xe5 36 ♖xe5 ♕xe5 37 ♖f3 ♕e7 38 ♖d3 ♗c8 39 ♕a8 ♗f5 40 ♖d6 ♕e5, obtaining a perfectly defensible position.

34...fxe6

The alternative was 34...♔g7 35 ♕a1+ f6, when to retain a great and then decisive advantage White would have had to find a rather lengthy solution, the first half of which would have comprised nervy, pre-time control moves: 36 ♘e4! ♖xe6 37 ♘g5 ♖xe1 38 ♕xe1 ♖a4 (of course, not 38...fxg5? 39 ♕xb4 Karpov) 39 ♘e6+ ♔g8 40 ♖d3! ♕e5 41 ♖e3 ♕b2 42 ♕d1! ♖a2 43 ♖e2 ♕a1 44 ♕d8 ♖a8 45 ♕c7 and wins.

35 ♖xe6 ♔h8



36 ♖ae3!

This rook, the invasion of which at a7 so frightened Black, unexpectedly switches to the e-file.

36...♖xe6?

36...♕a8! was far more tenacious. After 37 ♕c2 ♖xe6 38 ♖xe6 Black can transfer his heavy pieces to the field of battle, but his light-squared bishop, stuck on the queenside, is unable to render any assistance: if 38...♗g7, then the unexpected 39 ♘c4!! with the threat of ♕e4(2) is decisive, and he is also not saved by 38...♕d8 39 ♘e4 ♕d7 40 ♖f6! ♗g7 41 ♖f3 ♖d4 42 ♘d6 or 38...♖d4 39 ♕c3 ♗g7 40 ♕e3 ♖d8 41 ♘e4 (41 ♘f3 ♖f8 42 ♖e7 ♗c8 43 ♘e5 is also good) 41...♗c8 (41...♖e8 42 ♘d6 ♖xe6 43 ♕xe6) 42 ♖e7 ♖f8 43 ♘d6 ♕a2 44 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 45 ♖e8+ ♖xe8 46 ♕xe8+ ♕g8 47 ♕xc6 ♕f8 (47...b4 48 ♕b7) 48 ♕d5 and wins.

37 ♕xe6 ♖f4 (37...♗xc5 38 ♕f6+ and ♖d3 Karpov) **38 ♘e4 ♕d8?**

In time-trouble Black blunders a rook, but,

in view of the unavoidable invasion of the knight at f6 or d6, there was no longer any way of saving the game: 38...♗g7(h6) 39 ♘d6! etc.

39 ♕e5+ 1-0

The bishop at b7 is a silent reproach to Black's strategy. Karpov's accurate and confident play at the most tense moment of the game creates a great impression.

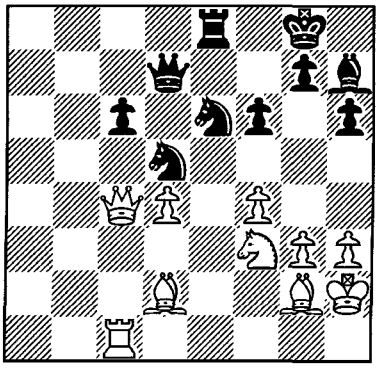
In this double-round tournament of eight grandmasters Karpov twice(!) defeated Korchnoi and Shirov, and in the end he finished first by a big margin – 10½ out of 14 (+8–1=5). It is evident that he was striving to demonstrate to himself and to the whole world that it was rather early to write him off...

And in Linares (February-March 1994), now the FIDE world champion, he tried his utmost to show that his official title, acquired in the match with Timman, 'weighed' no less that my historic title, confirmed by my victory over Short.

Karpov had one other powerful stimulus: of all the traditional super-tournaments in which he had ever taken part, for some reason he had been least successful in Linares: 1st-2nd (1981), 2nd-3rd (1983), 2nd (1989), 7th-8th (1991), 4th (1992), and 2nd-3rd (1993). Moreover, in 1992 and 1993 I had finished first with the identical result of 10 out of 13, while Karpov had correspondingly finished 2½ and 1½ points behind me. As V. and I.Linder write, 'it would appear that all these comparative failures stirred up in him a passionate desire to win the Linares tournament, which by this time had become a kind of litmus test of "who's who" in the chess world.'

As it later transpired, a far from unimportant role was played by the pairings, which placed us alongside each other: I drew No.10 and Karpov No.11. Thus all the participants except one (Lautier) had to play us in turn. Averbakh: 'It may be that this is the secret of Karpov's superb result: his opponents, who had just grappled with Kasparov, were pretty much worn out.' However, the miracle that occurred can hardly be explained by this or by the staggering good fortune which accompanied the FIDE champion from the very start.

'One's mood is affected by luck,' – Karpov was to say after the tournament. This thought was confirmed in the very first round, when with Black in a time scramble he snatched victory against Lautier.



39...♗e4?! (instead of the calm 39...♘d8) **40 ♕xc6?**

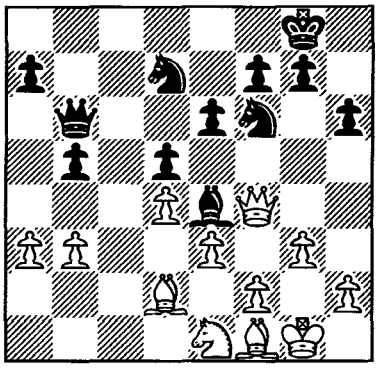
With the simple 40 ♘e5! fxe5 41 ♗xe4 exf4 42 ♕xc6 fxg3+ 43 ♔xg3 White would have forced a draw from a position of strength – 43...♖d8 (Karpov).

40...♕xc6 41 ♖xc6 ♘dxf4! (of course!) **42 ♖d6 ♘xg2 43 ♔xg2 ♘c7!** (not 43...♘g5 44 ♗xg5 fxg5 45 ♖a6! with equality – Karpov) **44 ♔f2 ♖a8 45 ♗e3 ♘b5! 46 ♖b6 ♘c3 47 ♖b3?** (disheartened by his blunder on the time control move, Lautier loses without a fight) **47...♘d1+ 48 ♔e2 ♗d5!** (or 48...♗c2! 49 ♖b7 ♖e8) **49 ♖d3** (49 ♖b6 ♘xe3) **49...♗c4 0-1**

In the 2nd round Karpov 'took over' Bareev from me and, knowing his attachment to the French Defence, after 1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 c5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♘gf3 ♘f6 6 ♗b5+ ♗d7 7 ♗xd7+ ♘bxd7 8 0–0 ♗e7 9 dxc5 ♘xc5 10 ♘d4 he initiated his favourite play against the isolated pawn. Bareev equalised, but five moves before the time control, now in a dead-drawn position, he inexplicably

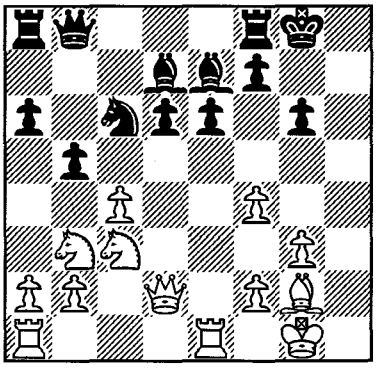
blundered a rook, allowing mate in one move!

So, we both started with two wins, and in the 3rd round we both had Black: I made a draw with Topalov, but Karpov played the opening badly against Illescas and then... trapped his queen in the middle of the board!



26 ♗b4? (26 g4 was essential) **26...a5! 27 ♗e7 e5!** (a surprise: if 28 dxe5?, then 28...g5! and wins) **28 ♕h4 exd4 29 ♕f4 dxe3 30 ♕xe3 d4**, and although Black later lost his advantage, Illescas missed a way to draw and the passed d-pawn decided matters.

In the 4th round I managed to beat Ivanchuk in impressive style, but Karpov also seriously warmed up, prettily crushing Topalov. This game was deemed the best in the 60th volume of *Informator* and, along with Game Nos.67, 71 and 79 it rightly found its way into the well-known book *The World's Greatest Chess Games.*



18 ♘c5! dxc5 (18...♗e8 19 ♘xe6! fxe6 20 ♖xe6 is also bad for Black) **19 ♕xd7 ♖c8 20 ♖xe6!** (a striking blow) **20...♖a7 21 ♖xg6+! fxg6** (there is nothing else) **22 ♕e6+ ♔g7 23 ♗xc6 ♖d8 24 cxb5 ♗f6 25 ♘e4 ♗d4 26 bxa6 ♕b6 27 ♖d1 ♕xa6 28 ♖xd4!** (Karpov: 'A rare occurrence – for the third successive time a rook is sacrificed!') **28...♖xd4 29 ♕f6+**, and White won (**1-0**).

In the 5th round I beat Judit Polgar, while Karpov received a 'generous gift' from Ivanchuk, who after a favourable opening suddenly began to 'drift' and, after blundering an important pawn on the 28th move, promptly resigned. In the 6th round with difficulty I saved a half point in my game with Gelfand, while Karpov technically defeated Polgar after employing a 'special weapon': 1 e4 c5 2 c3!? e6 3 d4 d5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♘f3 ♘c6 6 ♗b5 c4?! 7 ♘e5! ♕b6 8 ♗xc6+ bxc6 9 0-0 ♗d6 10 b3! etc. In connection with this game, the words of Igor Zaitsev come to mind: 'Every outstanding grandmaster has his own chess vision, his chess compass, which in the opening does not allow him to go against his inner convictions. Thus Kapengut with Black tried to tempt Karpov with the Modern Benoni, while Sveshnikov tried to persuade him to dip into the quietly flowing waters of the 2 c3 variation in the Sicilian Defence – but all their efforts were in vain!' And for Judit alone did he make an exception...

Before the 7th round, in which we played each other, Karpov had 6 out of 6(!), with me a point behind. I had the white pieces, and it was clear that this was the decisive game of the tournament. My trainer Yuri Dokhoian and I spent a long time racking our brains over how to try and breach the Caro-Kann Defence on this occasion. In it I won twice against Karpov in Amsterdam (1988) and twice in Linares (1992 and 2001), but on this occasion, in 1994, something went wrong, and evidently I burned myself out even while preparing for the game. After a badly played

opening I then even had to save myself! Averbakh: 'While in the previous two Linares tournaments it was his victories over Karpov that, to a large extent, determined Kasparov's ultimate success, this time it was a case of "diamond cut diamond": the game was drawn and the gap remained unchanged.'

In the 8th round I drew with Shirov, but in time-trouble the inspired leader outplayed Gelfand in a complicated position, although on the 37th move the latter could have set his opponent difficult problems. In the 9th round Karpov failed to win a better ending against Shirov, while I managed to beat Kamsky and to reduce the deficit: I now had 7 points, but Karpov had 8!

In the 10th round – a rare occurrence – luck deserted my rival: after gaining an endgame with an extra pawn and winning chances against Kamsky, he threw away the advantage with his hasty 33rd move... However, this did not help me: trying at all costs to win with Black against the new star of Russian chess Vladimir Kramnik, I played the King's Indian Defence too riskily, overstepped the mark, came under attack and lost.

In Averbakh's opinion, 'The question of first place was effectively decided by Kramnik: after defeating Kasparov, in the next round he lost to Karpov.' Before the game Vladimir, who was then not yet 19 years old, stated in an interview: 'In this tournament Karpov has been very aggressive, often going in for dubious positions. If he plays like this against me, I have a chance of beating him.' But Karpov did not give him such a chance.

Game 103
A.Karpov-V.Kramnik
Linares 1994, 11th round
Semi-Slav Defence D48

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘f3 ♘f6 4 ♘c3 e6 5 e3 ♘bd7

At that time Kramnik regularly employed the 'Meran' and he felt very much at home in it.

6 ♗d3 (6 ♕c2 – *Game Nos.95 and 96*) **6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 a6**

In the 9th round game Karpov-Shirov after 8...♗b7 9 a3 b4 10 ♘e4 a5?! 11 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 12 e4 ♗e7 13 ♕e2 c5 14 ♗b5+ ♔f8 15 dxc5 ♗xc5 16 ♗d3 White gained an advantage. 10...♘xe4 11 ♗xe4 bxa3 12 bxa3 ♗d6 equalises, as played later against Karpov by Kramnik (Dortmund 1995; Monaco rapidplay 1996) and Anand (3rd matchgame, Lausanne 1998).

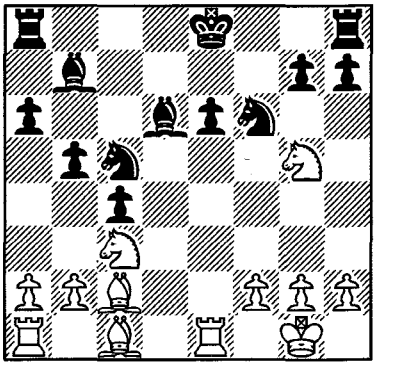
9 e4 c5 10 d5 c4

A month later in Monaco, Kramnik replied 10...♕c7 11 0-0 ♗b7 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 ♗c2 ♗e7 (cf. *Game No.105*, note to Black's 13th move).

11 dxe6 fxe6 (11...cxd3 – *Game No.80*) **12 ♗c2 ♗b7** (12...♕c7 13 0-0 ♗c5 has also been tried) **13 0-0 ♕c7 14 ♘g5**

The alternative is 14 ♘d4 or 14 ♕e2 (*Game No.105*). 'White must hasten to seek active continuations. If he does not succeed in exploiting his temporary lead in development, Black's active pawns on the queenside, together with the open lines and diagonals, will enable him to seize the initiative.' (Karpov)

14...♘c5 (14...♕c6?! 15 ♕f3! Gligoric-Ljubojevic, Linares 1991) **15 e5!** (a novelty from the early 1990s) **15...♕xe5 16 ♖e1 ♕d6 17 ♕xd6 ♗xd6**



Kramnik went in for this position without hesitation, probably thinking that he knew it 'in all its details'. But here he encountered an original idea, of a strategic, rather than tactical

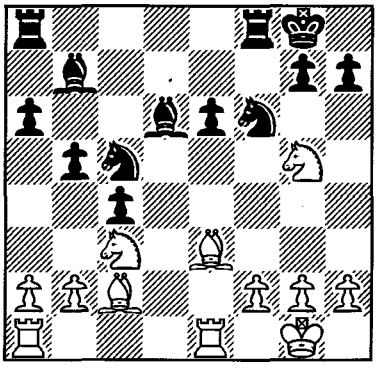
nature – involving the subtle interpretation of a non-standard endgame.

18 ♗e3!

A surprise! Previously only 18 ♘xe6 ♘xe6 19 ♖xe6+ ♔d7 20 ♖e2 ♖ae8 (20...b4!?) or 20 ♗f5 ♔c7 had occurred, and the initiative even passed to Black. Karpov opens a new page in the development of the variation, deferring the pawn capture for the sake of rapid mobilisation.

18...0-0

A natural move, although Kramnik thought over it for about 50 minutes. He was evidently wondering what unpleasant surprises might await him in the event of the equally natural reply 18...♘d3!? 19 ♗xd3 cxd3. After 20 ♘xe6 (Ftacnik) 20...♔f7 Black would be satisfied with either 21 ♘f4 b4 22 ♘a4 ♗xf4 23 ♗xf4 ♖ac8!, or 21 ♗c5 d2! 22 ♖e2 b4 23 ♘a4 ♗c6 24 ♘b6 ♗xc5 25 ♘xa8 ♗b5. 20 ♖ad1!, picking up both the d3-pawn and the e6-pawn, is better, for example: 20...0-0 21 ♖xd3 ♗d5 22 ♘xe6 ♗xh2+ 23 ♔xh2 ♗xe6 24 ♖d6 ♖fe8 (Kramnik–Kuczynski, Bundesliga 1994) 25 ♗d2 with an insignificant advantage.

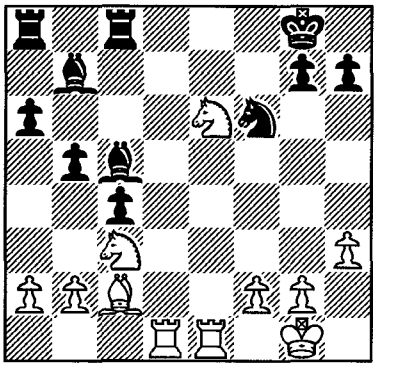


19 ♖ad1 ♗e7 (of course, not 19...♖fd8? 20 ♖xd6 and ♗xc5) **20 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 21 ♘xe6 ♖fc8 22 h3!**

After 22 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 23 ♖e7 ♖b8 (Karpov) or 23...♗c6 (Ftacnik), as well as 22 a3 ♗b6! 23 ♘xg7 ♘g4 24 ♖f1 ♖d8! (Gelfand-Illescas, Dos Hermanas 1995) Black successfully defends.

The modest, typically Karpov move 22 h3 prepares a large-scale offensive on the kingside. The main aim is to drive the knight from f6. After this, having gained access to the squares e4, d5 and d7, White can extract benefit from the strong position of his knight at e6 and his rooks on the central files.

On encountering a 'venomous' problem, which has no forced solution, under conditions of restricted time for thought, Kramnik was unable to fully figure out the subtleties of the resulting position.



22...♗f8?

An obvious, but weak move. 22...♗a7? 23 ♘xg7! b4 24 ♘a4 is even worse. Later 22...♗b4 was tried, but Korchnoi's recommendation 22...♖ab8! (intending ...♗a7) is better – Black maintains the balance after both 23 g4 ♗f3 24 ♖d2 b4 (later he switched to 24...♖e8!?) 25 ♘a4 ♗a7! 26 g5 ♘d5 (Nikolic-Bareev, Munich 1994) and 23 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 24 ♖e6 b4 25 ♘a4 ♖g5! (Kramnik-Shirov, Novgorod 1994) or 24 ♖d6 b4 25 ♘a4 ♖d5 (Gelfand-Shirov, Biel 1995).

Nevertheless, 18 ♗e3 was judged to be the most important theoretical novelty in the 60th issue of *Informator* – and thus two games by the victor in Linares (with Topalov and Kramnik) came top in the two nominations. Karpov: 'A very rare occurrence in the history of these competitions!'

23 g4 h6

Black would like to nail the f-pawn to the

f2-square, but after 23...♗f3 24 ♖d4! all the same he has a difficult position. Thus if 24...b4?! 25 ♘a4 the weakness of the c4-pawn causes his downfall: 25...♖ab8 (if 25...♘d5? Karpov gives 26 ♖e5 'etc.', but 26 ♘g5! is far simpler) 26 ♘xf8 ♔xf8 (26...♖xf8 27 ♖xc4) 27 ♖f4 (Ftacnik) or 24...♖ab8 25 ♘b6 ♖c6 (25...♖e8 26 ♘xf8 and ♘xc4) 26 ♘d7! ♘xd7 27 ♖xd7 with the threat of ♗xh7+ or ♘xf8 and ♖ee7.

24 f4! (exploiting the fact that the black bishop has left the a7-g1 diagonal) **24...♗f3**

Black drives the rook off the 1st rank, so that a possible opposition of rooks on the e-file should also cause White some concern.

25 ♖d2

'25 ♖d4 looks more energetic, with the idea of 25...♗c6?! 26 g5 hxg5 27 fxg5 ♘d7 28 ♖h4, and Black's king is in a mating net. However, after 25...♖e8 he is threatening ...♖xe6 and ...♗c5 or immediately ...♗c5.' (Karpov). True, here too after 26 ♔f2 ♖xe6 (or 26...♗b7 27 ♘xf8) 27 ♖xe6 ♗c5 28 ♔xf3 ♗xd4 29 ♘d1 White has the better endgame.

25...♗c6

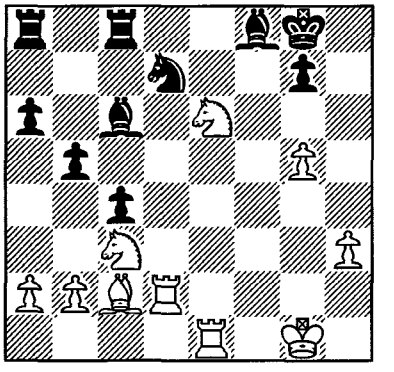
Kramnik secures the d7-square for his knight, not wishing after 25...b4 26 ♘a4 ♖ab8 (26...c3?! 27 bxc3 bxc3 28 ♖f2 ♗d5 29 ♘b6 ♗xe6 30 ♖xe6 ♗c5 31 ♘xa8 ♖xa8 32 ♖c6 and wins – Ftacnik) 27 g5 hxg5 28 fxg5 to have to move it to the edge of the board.

Indeed, in the event of 28...♘h5 29 ♗g6 ♗c6 (29...b3 30 axb3 ♗b4 31 ♖f2 ♗xe1 32 ♖xf3 ♖xb3 33 ♗f7+ ♔h8 34 ♗xh5 ♖xf3 35 ♗xf3 c3 could have helped Black to gain a draw, but after 30 a3! things are bad for him, since 30...♗xa3?! 31 bxa3 c3 32 ♘xc3 ♖xc3 33 ♘d8 does not work) 30 ♗xh5 ♗xa4 31 ♖f1! White unexpectedly threatens a mating attack (♗f7 and ♖f4) and after 31...♖b7 (31...♗c5+ 32 ♔g2! ♗c6+ 33 ♔g3 is worse for Black) 32 ♖d4 he wins at least a pawn.

Black would have had to play 28...♘h7 in the hope of 29 h4 b3 30 axb3 ♗b4 31 ♘c3 ♗xc3 32 bxc3 cxb3, but the accurate 29 ♖d4! parries any attempts based on tactical nuances, and maintains a dominating position for White.

26 g5 hxg5 27 fxg5 ♘d7

Not 27...♘h5? (Korchnoi) 28 ♗g6 ♘g3 29 ♔h2 and wins (Ftacnik).



28 ♘xf8!

A transformation of advantages: the knight was preventing the invasion of the rooks, and Karpov gives it up without regret.

28...♘xf8 (after 28...♖xf8 29 ♖e6! Black faces virtually insoluble problems) **29 ♖d6! b4**

An attempt to create counterplay. Finding himself under positional pressure, Kramnik is forced to seek a way out of an unpleasant situation: there are no variations leading to a loss, but also no ways of easing the defence with the help of exchanges. Thus after 29...♖e8 (Korchnoi) 30 ♖xe8 ♗xe8 White dominates in the centre and has a whole range of tempting continuations.

30 ♘e4

Karpov takes his knight to f5, hoping to create irresistible threats to the king. 30 ♘d5! (Karpov) 30...♗xd5 31 ♖xd5 was technically more forceful, remaining with a powerful bishop against a knight. Fischer would have played this without thinking! Then it is bad to play 31...c3 32 g6! (Ftacnik) 32...cxb2 33 ♗b3 ♖c3 34 ♖b1! or 31...♖d8 (C.Hansen) 32 ♖c5 ♖ac8 33 ♖xc4! ♖xc4 34 ♗b3, winning a pawn and the game, but even after the more tenacious 31...♖ab8 32 ♖d4(6) Black has little

chance of gaining a draw.

30...♗e8

30...♗xe4 31 ♗xe4 or 30...♘d7 31 ♘g3! was worse. In Karpov's opinion, '30...♗d7 31 h4 ♖c6 was necessary, when Black can still breathe' But only with difficulty: 32 ♖xc6 ♗xc6 33 ♘d6 ♗d5 34 ♖e5! ♗e6 35 ♖a5 etc. And if 30...♖a7, then 31 ♖d4!, combining working on the pawn weaknesses with an attack on the king: 31...♗d7 32 ♘d6, or 31...♗a8 32 g6!

31 ♘g3! ♖d8

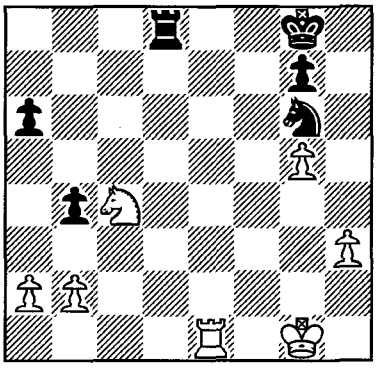
Now 31...♗d7 will not do on account of 32 ♖e7 ♗xh3 33 ♘h5 (Karpov) or 32 ♗e4. And if 31...c3 (C.Hansen) White wins by 32 ♘f5! cxb2 33 ♘e7+ ♔h8 34 ♘xc8 ♖xc8 35 ♖d2 (Ftacnik).

32 ♘f5 ♖xd6 (32...a5? 33 ♗e4 etc.) **33 ♘xd6 ♗g6?**

In time-trouble Kramnik gives up a pawn, although Black could still have defended while maintaining equal material: 33...♗f7 (Ernst) 34 ♘xf7 ♔xf7 35 ♖e4 ♖c8 36 b3!? cxb3 37 ♖f4+! ♔e8 38 ♗xb3 a5 39 ♖f5, or 33...♗d7!? 34 h4! ♗e6 35 ♖e4 (Ftacnik) – White's position is better, but this is not yet the end, and perhaps he would have had cause to regret the missed opportunity 30 ♘d5!

34 ♗xg6 ♘xg6 35 ♘xc4 ♖d8

'35...♖f8 was suicidal: 36 ♖e4! ♘f4 (36...♖f3 37 ♔g2) 37 h4 ♔h7 38 ♘e5.' (Karpov)



36 ♖e4! (neutralising Black's counterplay and preparing h3-h4) **36...b3** (comparatively the best chance; after 36...♖d3 37 ♔g2 White wins) **37 axb3**

According to Karpov, 37 a4 was more logical, subsequently winning the a-pawn.

37...♖d3 (Black pins his hopes on the limited amount of material remaining, but in vain) **38 ♔g2**

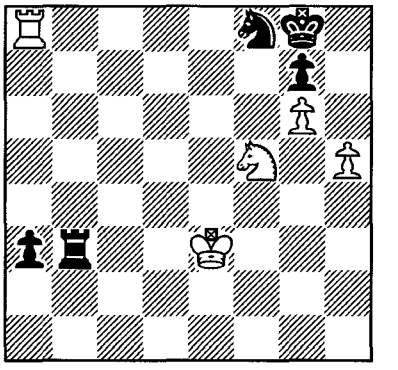
38 ♖e3 would also have won, for example: 38...♖xe3 39 ♘xe3 ♘f4 40 h4 (and if 40...♘d3, then 41 ♔f1!), or 38...♖d5 (C.Hansen) 39 ♖g3 ♘f4 40 ♔h2.

38...♖xb3 39 h4 ♘f8?!

After the more tenacious 39...♔f8 Karpov would have replied 40 h5 ♘e7 41 ♖e5. Curt Hansen recommended 39...♖b4, when 40 h5 ♘e5 would have given Black drawing chances in the rook ending, but the knight endgame after 40 ♔g3! ♘e5 41 ♘d6 ♖xe4 42 ♘xe4 ♔f7 43 ♘c5 a5 44 h5 (Ftacnik) or 42...♘d3 43 b3 g6 44 ♔f3 is lost for him.

40 ♖e8!

and Black lost on time (**1-0**). After the approximate 40...♔f7 (if 40...♖b4, both 41 ♖c8 and 41 ♘e5 ♖xb2+ 42 ♔f3 are good) 41 ♘d6+! (Karpov) 41...♔g8 42 g6 ♖xb2+ 43 ♔f3 ♖b6 White would still have had to overcome certain problems in order to win. He needs to shut in the black king and capture the a-pawn: 44 ♖d8 a5 45 h5 a4 46 ♘f5 ♖b3+ (46...♖f6 47 ♔g4 ♖e6 48 ♖a8 ♖f6 49 ♔g5 ♖e6 50 ♘xg7!) 47 ♔f4 ♖b4+ 48 ♔g5 ♖b5 49 ♖a8! a3 50 ♔f4 ♖b4+ 51 ♔e3 ♖b3+.



Analysis diagram

Ljubomir Ftacnik's analysis concludes with the variation 52 ♔e2 ♖b2+ 53 ♔e1 ♖b1+ 54 ♔d2 ♖f1 55 ♘e7+ ♔h8 56 ♖xa3 ♘e6 57 ♖a6 ♘f8 58 ♖a8 and the evaluation '+–'. It is probable that White does indeed have a winning position, but his last move allows the opponent to exploit stalemate motifs – 58...♖d1+! 59 ♔e3 ♖d8! Therefore, in my view, 58 ♘c6! and only then ♖a8 is more accurate.

It is possible that 52 ♔d4 ♖b4+ 53 ♔c5 wins more quickly, for example: 53...♖f4 54 ♘e7+ ♔h8 55 ♔d5 ♖f3 56 ♔e4 ♖f6 57 ♘f5 ♖e6+ 58 ♔f4 ♔g8 59 ♖xa3 ♖e8 60 ♖a7 ♘e6+ 61 ♔g4 ♖f8 (61...♔h8 62 h6) 62 ♖e7 ♖f6 63 ♖e8+ ♘f8 64 ♔g5 ♔h8 65 ♘xg7 – curtains!

It is interesting that a position with the same forces – rook, knight and two pawns (at g6 and h5) against rook, knight and g7-pawn, but with the knight at g8 – occurred in the game Kramnik-Krasenkow (Wijk aan Zee 2003) and also ended in a win for White.

After this win the fate of the tournament was finally decided. Subsequently Karpov made a draw with Anand and crushed Beliavsky in a Catalan. He was always a difficult opponent for the famous Ukrainian grandmaster, as is indicated by Game Nos.98 and 102, as well as the overall score of their meetings since 1973: +16–3=10 in favour of Anatoly Evgenyevich.

Thus was achieved one of the most outstanding tournament results in the history of chess: 1. Karpov – 11 out of 13 (+9=4); 2-3. Kasparov and Shirov – 8½; 4. Bareev – 7½; 5-6. Kramnik and Lautier – 7; 7-9. Anand, Kamsky and Topalov – 6½; 10. Ivanchuk – 6, etc. When I had not yet cooled down after the battle, I stated: 'This competitive triumph, in my view, was not supported by outstanding play. I have seen Karpov play better. Now he has found an optimal manner of play, which, by virtue of his personal and playing qualities, enables him to achieve the maximum results with the minimal expenditure of nervous energy. A kind of apotheosis of pragmatism!'

The reaction of the chess world was summed up by Averbakh: 'The super-tournament in Linares ended sensationally: Karpov's result brings to mind the legendary successes of Alekhine at San Remo (1930) and Bled (1931), and Botvinnik's triumph in the 1945 USSR Championship (+13=4). Equally sensational was Karpov's unprecedented start: six out of six! It seems that the title of FIDE world champion has given him renewed confidence in his powers. This year Kasparov exactly repeated Karpov's 1993 result, but Karpov leaped head and shoulders above him!' As the statisticians reported, this was already his 125th tournament victory!

After this 'tournament of his life' Karpov apparently decided that he had now demonstrated everything to everyone, and he even made a bold statement in the press: 'Yes, I would like to play yet another match with Kasparov, but now he needs this match more than I do.'

However, Karpov's tournament successes soon began to decline: in April in Dos Hermanas he conceded first place to Gelfand, and in May in Las Palmas to Kamsky (each time scoring +4–1=4), and in the autumn he encountered great problems at the double-round 'Sicilian' super-tournament in Buenos Aires, where he only shared 5th-6th places with Kamsky, behind Salov, Anand, Ivanchuk and Polgar.

The participants in this unusual tournament were obliged to begin their games with 1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 and then 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 – only an Open Sicilian! 'This was an original way of marking the 60th birthday of the outstanding grandmaster Lev Polugayevsky. Although Polugayevsky's name is associated with an enormous number of novelties, scattered around various sections of chess theory, his contribution to the development of the Sicilian Defence has been the most impressive,' wrote Zaitsev.

Later, after praising the play of the tournament winners, Karpov's long-standing trainer commented with his customary tact: 'The more modest results of the remaining participants can largely be justified by the absence (or loss) of the Sicilian skills necessary for such a fierce battle.' I think that we have to respect Karpov's courage, in deciding to test his strength in what was perhaps his most difficult 'field of work'.

In Linares 1995, where I, Kramnik and Anand did not play, he finished second (+5=8) behind the brilliantly performing Ivanchuk (+7=6), while the result of the double-round Linares 2001 reflected the inexorable march of time: 1. Kasparov – 7½ out of 10; 2-6. Karpov... – 4½.

King of FIDE

The contesting of the world championship in the mid-1990s was undoubtedly the most intensive and unusual in the history of chess. The challengers battled simultaneously in two series, trying to qualify in the PCA series for a match with me, and in the FIDE series for a match with Karpov. Moreover, according to a peace treaty between FIDE and the PCA, concluded during the Olympiad and Congress in Moscow (1994), a 'unification' match for the crown was also envisaged.

The favourites in both series were the already experienced 25-year-old Indian Vishy Anand and the rapidly improving 20-year-old 'new American' Gata Kamsky. In January 1994 they distinguished themselves in FIDE matches: Anand beat Yusupov, and Kamsky beat Van der Sterren (in each case by 4½-2½). In June both convincingly won their PCA matches: Anand against Romanishin (5-2) and Kamsky against Kramnik (4½-1½).

And then in July a random draw brought them together in a FIDE quarter-final match. This was a fierce battle! Vishy threw away an obvious advantage in the 1st game and a simple win in the 2nd, then he nevertheless scored two wins and was very close to success in the 5th game, but he delayed and by tenacious defence Gata saved half a point. The match was the best of eight games, and it could well have concluded ahead of schedule... True, the score of 3½-1½ also did not herald a sensation. But here something broke down in Anand's well-regulated mechanism (this also happened to him in his matches with me and Karpov). The exceptionally strong-willed Kamsky levelled the scores (4-4) and – miraculously! – finished off his demoralised opponent in the tie-break by 2-0, and this against one of the acknowledged kings of rapidplay chess!

'Kamsky has undoubtedly developed as a player, and his qualitative progress is obvious,' Karpov declared after this. 'But it is my firm conviction that the result of his two matches – with Kramnik and Anand – lies in the field of psychology. The downfall of both Gata's opponents was caused by the fact that they did not take him seriously...'

But in the September PCA semi-final match, inspired by his success, Gata literally massacred Short (5½-1½) – who had been the 'No.1' challenger of the previous cycle. However, Anand too did not grieve for long after his disappointing defeat in the FIDE cycle: in the other semi-final he crushed Adams by the same score – and again had to meet Kamsky, only this time in the PCA final!

Less than a month after this severe test, in February 1995, in an almost offhand manner (again 5½-1½) Kamsky made short work of Salov in a semi-final FIDE match, which also looked impressive, as earlier his opponent had knocked out Khalifman and Timman.

However, Gata was unable to beat the 'Indian miracle-worker' a second time: on this occasion, despite losing on time in a winning position in the first game, Vishy dominated throughout and won the final PCA match (6½-4½).

Thus my next opponent in the match for the world championship (New York, autumn 1995) became Anand, and I defeated him in a

severe struggle: 10½-7½ (+4–1=13). And in the final FIDE world championship match (Elista, summer 1996) Karpov did not leave Kamsky any hopes – also 10½-7½ (but +6–3=9).

It is evident that Karpov 'took Gata seriously'. Although, initially the outcome of this match of 20 games seemed unclear and puzzling: would the long-standing occupant of the chess summit be able to withstand the onslaught of the staggeringly purposeful leader of the new generation? In this respect Kamsky vividly resembled the young Karpov. But what he definitely lacked was Karpov's flexibility and depth of positional evaluation, which ultimately decided the match. Gata was not even helped by the fact that his opponent was a whole 23 years older...

And yet Kamsky was pinning enormous hopes on this match! Back in 1994 reports had appeared in the press that by one or other course – PCA or FIDE (or perhaps both!) he would definitely 'get through to Kasparov'. Now he had only one chance left – to beat Karpov. And, unusually for him, he even took a lengthy break from playing, devoting a lot of time to preparation. In the match Gata employed many varied openings, evidently hoping that Karpov would no longer be capable of following the rapidly changing evaluations of modern variations. However, despite all his preparation, and his extraordinary hard work, persistence and will-power, Kamsky was unable to put up a genuinely serious resistance against the champion.

The very first game, won by Karpov in his favourite positional style, demonstrated his obvious superiority in manoeuvring. True, Kamsky impressively won the 2nd. Such a start was traditional for the 'king of FIDE': he also began with a win and a loss in his match with Timman (1993) and also subsequently with Anand (1998).

There then followed a 50-move draw, and in the 4th game Karpov gained convincing revenge for his defeat in the 2nd: 1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 exd5 cxd5 4 c4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 e6 6 ♘f3 ♗b4 7 cxd5 ♘xd5 8 ♗d2 ♘c6 9 ♗d3 0-0 10 0-0 ♗e7 11 ♕e2 ♘f6 12 ♘e4 ♕b6!? (the 2nd game went 12...♗d7 13 ♖ad1 ♖c8 14 ♖fe1 ♘d5 15 ♘c3 ♘f6 16 a3 ♕c7?! 17 ♗g5 ♕a5?! 18 d5! exd5 19 ♗xf6! ♗xf6 20 ♗xh7+! ♔xh7 21 ♖xd5... 1-0) 13 a3 ♗d7 14 ♖fd1 ♖ad8! 15 ♘xf6+ ♗xf6 16 ♕e4 g6 17 ♗e3 ♘e7!... 0-1. The press wrote about Karpov's play: 'His manoeuvring strategy proved hard for his 22-year-old opponent to understand.'

After this win the champion maintained his lead throughout and in the subsequent games he dictated matters. And whereas a sharp opening skirmish in the 5th game led to a rapid draw, it is highly probable that the amazing events in the 6th game undermined Kamsky's belief in his ultimate success.

Game 104
G.Kamsky-A.Karpov
FIDE World Championship Match, Elista 1996, 6th game
Petroff Defence C43

1 e4 e5 2 ♘f3 ♘f6

This temporary rejection of the Caro-Kann in favour of a solid reserve opening should not have surprised Gata.

3 d4 (at that time this variation was very popular; 3 ♘xe5 – *Game No.88*) **3...♘xe4 4 ♗d3 d5 5 ♘xe5 ♘d7 6 ♘xd7**

But not 6 ♕e2 ♘xe5! etc., as in the well-known game Karpov-Larsen (*Volume 4, Game No.48*).

6...♗xd7 7 0-0 ♗d6

'Karpov has his own way – he does not launch into the sharp variations after 7...♕h4 8 c4 0-0-0 9 c5 g5.' (Beliavsky, Mikhalchishin)

8 ♘c3

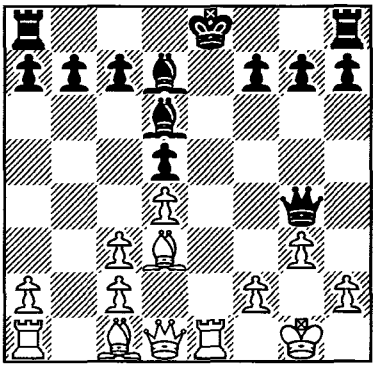
A move which became fashionable after the example set by grandmaster Kharlov. The main line was and still is 8 c4! (cf. *Volume 4, Game No.48*, note to White's 6th move).

8...♕h4

Karpov thought about this risky sortie for

42 minutes. Later 8...♘xc3 9 bxc3 0-0 10 ♕h5 f5 was considered to be a reliable way to equalise, as, for example, played against Shirov by Kramnik (Belgrade 1997; 2nd matchgame, Cazorla 1998) and Anand (2nd matchgame, Groningen 1997).

9 g3 ♘xc3 10 bxc3 ♕g4?! (10...♕h3 11 ♖e1+ ♗e6 is nevertheless more solid, with the idea of 12 ♖b1 0-0-0, while the recommendation by Beliavsky and Mikhalchishin, 12 ♗f1 ♕f5 13 g4, is dubious in view of 13...♕f6!) **11 ♖e1+**



11...♔d8!?

'A valuable novelty' (Karpov), continuing the same risky strategy. This move, like 10...♕g4, was made instantly – it was all decided while Black was considering his 8th move. 'The loss of castling does at all not concern the present-day Karpov.' (Beliavsky, Mikhalchishin). Wouldn't you agree that in some way this resembles the bold and unusual playing manner of Steinitz and Lasker?

The normal 11...♔f8 would have led after 12 ♗e2 ♕f5 (Magem-Illescas, Pamplona 1995) 13 ♖b1! followed by c3-c4 to problems for Black in view of the disrupted coordination of his pieces. It appears that after the unusual move in the game it will be even harder for him to connect his rooks. But Karpov thinks that the most important thing is to bring his h8-rook into play quickly, and then connect the rooks later, in an original way. And, what is very typical, is that he succeeds in carrying out his audacious idea!

12 ♗e2

Kamsky, naturally, tries to punish his opponent: with the queens on White can hope for an attack. The endgame after 12 ♕xg4 ♗xg4 13 ♖b1 b6 14 c4 c6 (M.Gurevich) or 13...♖b8 (Ftacnik) 14 c4 (14 ♔g2 ♔d7) 14...dxc4 15 ♗xc4 f6 would not have promised White much.

12...♕f5 13 ♖b1 (13 c4!? Karpov) **13...b6**

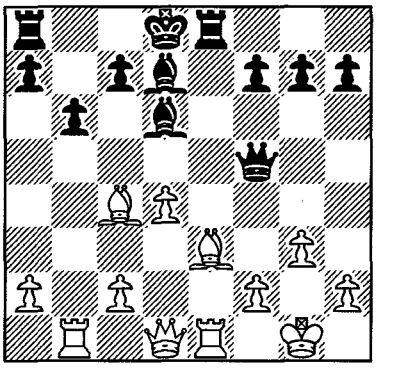
In the event of 13...♔c8 14 c4 dxc4 15 ♗xc4 h5 16 h4 Black would have remained in difficulties, and so he sticks to a different plan.

14 c4 dxc4 (14...c6?! 15 c5! and c2-c4 Karpov) **15 ♗xc4 ♖e8!**

After 15...h5 16 ♗d3 ♕g4 17 ♗e2 and ♗f3! (Karpov) White would have switched his bishop onto 'its' diagonal with gain of tempo, and his attack in the centre would have been far more dangerous than Black's flank diversion.

16 ♗e3

Blocking the e-file and avoiding exchanges, in order to exploit the disharmony in Black's forces. After 16 ♖xe8+ ♔xe8 17 ♗d3 (17 ♕e2+ ♔f8 is equal) 17...♕d5 18 c4 ♕xd4 19 ♗b2 ♕g4 (M.Gurevich) the position of the black king in the centre is invulnerable, and White probably has nothing better than to exchange queens and regain the pawn, with a roughly equal endgame.



16...♗c6!

An important move: the threat of ...♗f3(e4)

forces White to block the long diagonal. 'At the cost of two tempi Black averts the breakthrough c2-c4-c5.' (Karpov)

17 d5

Of course, not 17 ♗f1? ♕d5. But now the d5-pawn restricts the mobility of White's light-squared bishop, while the black bishop at d6 becomes not only a strong defensive piece, but also in some cases an attacking one!

17...♗d7 18 ♗f1?!

It would appear that Gata did not imagine how Black would solve the problem of completing his development, and believed that he had sufficient time to prepare an attack. Therefore, not seeing for the moment an active plan, he makes 'good-quality' moves.

According to Karpov, the only way of casting doubts on Black's idea was the sharp 18 ♗d3! In the event of 18...♕xd5 19 c4 it is hard to Black to safeguard his king: after 19...♕a5? there follows 20 c5! ♗xc5 21 ♗b5 ♗d6 22 ♕d5 ♖b8 23 ♗g5+ f6 24 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 25 ♗d2 ♕a3 26 ♗b4, winning the queen, while if 19...♕e5, then 20 h4 f6 (20...♔c8 21 c5) 21 ♗xh7 is strong.

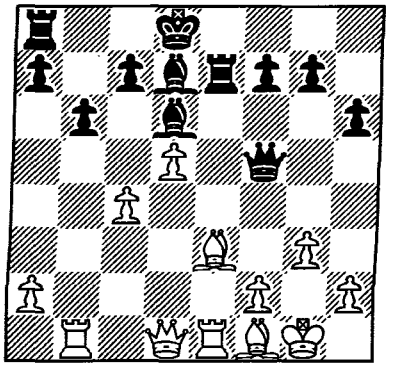
White would have gained an obvious advantage after 18...♕f6 19 ♕d2 h6 20 ♗a6!, for example: 20...c5 21 dxc6 ♗xc6 22 c4 ♔c7 23 c5, or 22...♖e6 23 ♗f4 ♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1 ♔c7 25 ♕xd6+! ♕xd6 26 ♖e7+ ♗d7 27 ♗b5 ♖d8 28 ♗xd6+ ♔xd6 29 ♖xf7 and wins.

His advantage would be less noticeable after 18...♕g4! If now 19 ♗e2 ♕g6 20 c4, then Black can force a draw: 20...♖xe3 21 fxe3 ♗xg3 22 ♗d3 ♗xh2+ 23 ♔xh2 ♕h6+. But after 19 ♕d2 his problems remain: 19...h6 20 c4, or 19...a5 20 ♗f1 (20 ♗e2 ♕f5 21 ♗d4) 20...♖e7 21 ♗d4 with some initiative.

18...h6

A far from obvious prelude to a highly effective regrouping. It was also possible to play the immediate 18...♖e7 19 c4 ♔e8 20 ♗d3 ♕f6 (20...♕h3 21 c5! bxc5 22 ♕c2 is less good), but all the same the move ...h7-h6 is necessary, so that in certain variations the h7-pawn should not be hanging and the g5-square should be covered, for example: 21 ♕d2 ♔f8? (21...h6!) 22 ♗g5 ♖xe1+ 23 ♖xe1 ♕d4 24 ♗xh7 ♕xc4 25 ♖e4 ♕b5 26 ♗f6! with a decisive attack.

19 c4 ♖e7!



But now Black's plan is obvious: he wants to play ...♔e8-f8 and ...♖ae8. Then White's initiative will quickly evaporate, and a slightly inferior endgame will await him. For the moment Kamsky has time to avoid such a development of events. But the question is, does he sense the approach of the critical moment?

20 ♗d3

White, to his misfortune, also devises a regrouping, aiming to prevent the black king from hiding on the kingside. It appears to Kamsky that, by creating the queen and bishop battery along the b1-h7 diagonal, he will disclose the defects in Black's position and the king at f8 will not be safe. But this proves to be an illusion!

20 ♗g2 (Karpov) was hardly any better – Black would have carried out the same plan: 20...♔e8 21 ♕d4 ♕g6 (21...♔f8? 22 ♗xh6 ♗e5 23 ♕h4 gxh6? 24 d6!) 22 ♕c3 ♔f8 23 c5 dxc5 24 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 25 ♕xc5 ♕d6, and a draw after 26 ♕xd6 cxd6 27 ♖xe7 ♔xe7 28 ♖b7 ♔d8 29 ♗f1 ♖c8 30 ♖xa7 ♖c5 would have been the quite logical outcome.

20...♕f6 21 ♔g2?!

Kamsky continues to avoid simplification, not believing that Black's slow plan can go unpunished. 'The impression is that White has

mixed up his pieces: instead of placing the bishop on its lawful square g2, he has occupied this square with his king.' (Karpov)

21 ♕c2 ♔e8 22 c5 bxc5 23 ♗xc5 is more active, and in the event of 23...♗xc5 24 ♕xc5 ♕d6 25 ♕xd6 cxd6 26 ♖xe7+ ♔xe7 27 ♖b7 (Ftacnik) White has the better endgame, while if 23...♔f8 24 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 25 ♗d4 with the idea of ♕c3 and ♖e1 (Christiansen) he has the initiative. However, after 23...♖xe1+ 24 ♖xe1+ ♔f8 the chances gradually become equal.

21...♔e8! 22 ♗c2 (it is probable that here too 22 ♕c2 with the idea of c4-c5 was better – Beliavsky, Mikhalchishin) **22...♕c3!**

A strong intermediate move. 'My reply cooled Kamsky's ardour.' (Karpov). Of course, the queen cannot be maintained at c3 for long, but for the moment it prevents the plan with ♕d3.

23 ♗b3?!

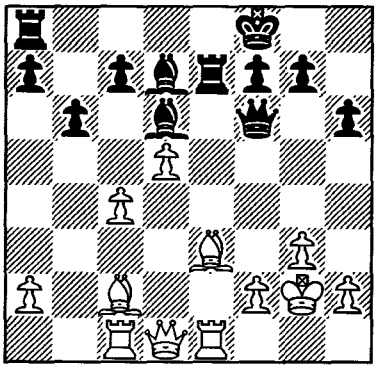
Of course, both 23 ♕d3 ♕xd3 and 23 ♗d4 ♖xe1 would most probably have led to a draw. But Kamsky is still thinking of more.

From this point of view 23 ♖c1!? was interesting, and if 23...♔f8, then 24 ♗b1, forcing Black to exercise caution: 24...♕f6 25 ♕d3 ♖ae8 26 ♗d4 (26 ♕h7 g5) 26...♗e5 27 ♕h7 g5 28 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 29 ♖c3 c5! 30 ♖f3 ♕g7 31 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 32 ♗xe5+ ♖xe5 33 ♖a3 ♖e7! This move enables Black to parry the threats to his queenside. After the amusing 29 ♗g6 he can play both 29...♕xg6 30 ♕h8+ ♕g8 31 ♕xh6+ ♕g7 32 ♕xg7+ ♔xg7 33 f4 f6 with a drawn endgame, and the no less amusing 29...♗h3+ 30 ♔xh3 g4+ 31 ♔xg4 fxg6 32 ♕xh6+ ♔g8 33 ♔h3 ♕f5+ 34 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 35 ♔g1 ♕xd4, after which White gives perpetual check.

However, no great danger is evident in the event of 23...♕xc4. Only, after 24 ♗f5 it is probably not worth taking the second pawn – the situation after 24...♕xa2 25 ♗xd7+ ♔xd7 26 ♕d3 ♖e5 27 ♖ed1 may prove unpleasant for Black. 24...♕a4 25 ♗xd7+ ♕xd7 26 ♕d3 f5 is safer, for example: 27 ♗d4 ♔f8 28 ♖e6 ♖xe6 29 ♕xf5+ ♕f7 30 ♕xf7+ ♔xf7 31 dxe6+ ♔xe6 32 ♗xg7 h5 with a double-edged endgame.

23...♔f8 24 ♖c1 ♕f6 25 ♗c2?!

White's stubbornness in conducting an unpromising plan has irreparable consequences. 25 c5 bxc5 26 ♗xc5 is more logical, and the attempt by Black to land a blow – 26...♗xc5 27 ♖xc5 ♗g4? meets with a spectacular refutation: 28 ♕xg4 ♖xe1 29 d6! (the f7-square is on the point of collapse) 29...♕g6 30 ♕f3 c6 31 ♖xc6 ♕f6 (31...♖d8 32 ♖c7 is totally bad) 32 ♕xf6 gxf6 33 ♖c7 with the better ending for White. But after 26...a5! (Karpov) 27 ♖xe7 ♕xe7 28 ♕f3 a4 29 ♗c4 ♖e8! the position is equal.



25...♖ae8

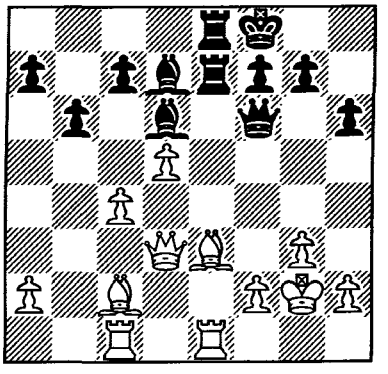
Karpov has successfully completed his planned regrouping, dumbfounding the game commentator grandmaster Daniel King: 'How Karpov does it, I don't know. He has an uncanny ability to coordinate his forces so that they are at their most efficient. Notice how he has arranged his pieces so that they do not stand in each other's way, and they are all protected; there appears not to be a single weakness in his whole army. Compare this position with the one where he played 11...♔d8; it is hard to imagine that he would be able to achieve such harmony. With his king safe, his rooks doubled and White's kingside weakened, the initiative has passed over to Karpov.'

Indeed, Black's position is now preferable.

And for White in such cases, after the great efforts spent searching for attacking continuations, it can be very difficult to readjust and defend. Through inertia he makes active moves, which often lead to disaster...

26 ♕d3?

Gata is still dreaming of the threats that his queen and bishop battery will create... Here, for the last time, he could have rejected his planned set-up and urgently exchanged bishops – 26 ♗a4 ♗xa4 27 ♕xa4, completely handing the initiative to his opponent (27...♕g6 28 ♕c2 ♖e4 29 ♗d2 ♗c5), but retaining real chances of a draw.



26...♗g4!

This must have come as an ice-cold shower for Kamsky! White has spent a great deal of time creating the threat of the queen's invasion at h7, but it turns out that after 27 ♕h7 g5! it is not he, but Black who begins a decisive attack on the king: 28 ♖b1 (28 ♔g1 ♗b4! 29 ♖f1 ♗e2) 28...♗xg3! 29 hxg3 ♖xe3! 30 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 31 fxe3 ♕f3+ 32 ♔g1 ♕xe3+ 33 ♔g2 ♗f3+ 34 ♔h3 g4+ 35 ♔h4 ♕g5 mate. With one move Karpov overturned the evaluation of the situation!

27 ♗d2??

'A real disaster' (Karpov). White's position is, of course, difficult, but it is still defensible. 27 f4 (but not 27 ♗d4? ♕f3+!) would have set definite problems – in Karpov's variation 27...♗c5 28 ♗xc5 bxc5 29 ♖xe7 ♖xe7 30 ♗d1 Black's chances of success are sharply reduced. However, he wins with the unexpected 27...♖xe3!! 28 ♖xe3 ♖xe3 29 ♕xe3 ♕b2!, for example: 30 h3 ♗f5 31 ♕d2 ♗e4+ 32 ♔f1 a5! 33 a4 f5 34 g4 ♗a3 35 gxf5 ♗xf5 36 ♔e2 ♗b4 37 ♕d1 g6.

The most tenacious defence was 27 ♗d1! ♗f5 28 ♕b3! (not 28 ♕d2 ♗a3 Karpov), although after 28...♗e4+ 29 ♔g1 ♔g8 30 ♗c2 h5 the black army looks very threatening.

27...♖e2! (the decisive invasion) **28 ♖xe2 ♖xe2 29 ♖f1** (29 ♗e1 ♗c5! Karpov) **29...♖xd2! 0-1**

In view of 30 ♕xd2 ♕f3+ 31 ♔g1 ♗h3.

An incredible finish! After such wanderings by the black king, it was hard to imagine that it would all end in a lighting and irresistible attack on... the white king. 'It would appear that Kamsky did not in fact fully realise what had happened on the board.' (Karpov)

Then the champion also won the 7th game, which lasted nearly seven hours and 71 moves, and after a draw in the 8th he also won the 9th! The score became crushing: 6½-2½. But here, to his honour, Gata managed to display his fighting qualities, and in the second half of the match there was an equal and fierce struggle. Karpov gained his sixth win in the 14th game (as though paying tribute to the memory of unlimited matches), and after the 18th he gathered the necessary 10½ points.

It need hardly be said how great a disappointment this was for the Kamskys – Gata and his strict father Rustem, who had devoted all their efforts to the achievement of the supreme goal. Soon, on the insistence of his father, this talented grandmaster gave up playing chess for a long time and began seriously studying medicine...

Meanwhile, on 23rd August 1996, at a four-way meeting between myself, Karpov, the FIDE President Kirsan Ilyumzhinov and the President of the Russian Chess Federation Andrey Makarov, it was decided that in 1997 a Kasparov-Karpov match 'for the absolute championship' would be held, and a few days

later we put our signatures to a corresponding memorandum.

I will not delve into the question of why our sixth match did not in fact take place (I will express my viewpoint in my autobiography), but a far from minor role in this was played by the result of a double-round super-tournament of the six strongest players in the world in Las Palmas (December 1996): 1. Kasparov – 6½ out of 10; 2. Anand – 5½; 3-4. Topalov and Kramnik – 5; 5-6. Ivanchuk and Karpov – 4.

In this category 21 tournament, a record for that time and comparable perhaps with the epochal AVRO tournament (1938), Anatoly Evgenyevich, after losing in the second half to Anand and me, was the only contestant who did not score a single win. Of course, he could and should have played better, if he had shown his full commitment to the tournament and had he not gone off at the height of the struggle to the opening of some junior championship in Paris. Here one can't help remembering Capablanca, who during the Moscow international tournament (1925) also travelled to another city – Leningrad, to give a simultaneous display, and suffered a defeat after his return.

After this, all that was left for Karpov was to defend his title of FIDE champion. Precisely at that time, on the instigation of Ilyumzhinov, under the pretext of making it livelier and more of a spectacle, the title of world champion began to be contested in knock-out tournaments, with 128 participants playing mini-matches of two games (at the later stages – four and six). In the event of the scores being equal, matters were decided by a tie-break: rapidplay chess, and if necessary even blitz.

Of course, I was not against the system itself, on which the famous first international tournament was held (London 1851), but I – and not only I! – thought that it was good only for a World Cup type of event, and absolutely unsuitable for determining the strongest player on the planet. Therefore, when Karpov and I ('in the aims of overall conciliation') were invited to join in at the semi-final stage (a serious privilege!) I declined to play as a matter of principle, not wishing to create a precedent which would cause damage to the historic title of world champion.

But then FIDE allowed Karpov directly into the super-final(!), despite the protests of many well-known grandmasters – Kramnik even refused to participate... A 'minor' detail: the participants in the super-final received the lion's share of the overall five million prize fund: $1.37 million went to the winner, and $768,000 to the loser.

The main stage of the first FIDE world championship held on the knock-out system took place from 9-30 December 1997 in Groningen and brought a deserved triumph to Vishy Anand. On the way to his goal he defeated Nikolic (2-0), Khalifman (1-1; rapidplay: 2½-1½), Almasi (2-0), Shirov (1½-½), Gelfand (1½-½) and Adams (2-2; rapidplay: 2-2; blitz: 1-0). And already in Lausanne on 1st January 1998 – just imagine! – the opening took place of his super-final match with Karpov, who had flown in to there from the Canary Islands...

It has to be said that Karpov spoke very respectfully about the play of the Indian grandmaster: 'His genius lies in his originality. Anand stands out among the many whom I have played against, and sticks in the memory. Here there is something special, Eastern, unfamiliar to us. We probably have a different view not only of life, but also the chessboard...' The fact that Vishy also has a different view of life was also clear from his interview after Groningen, in which he stated: 'I think that we should enter the 21st century, forgetting about privileges, and play normal world championships.'

So, the chess world witnessed FIDE's unprecedented 'Lausanne experiment' – a match of six games between the freshly relaxed 46-year-old Karpov and the 28-year-old Anand, exhausted by three weeks of struggle.

Game 105
A.Karpov-V.Anand
FIDE World Championship Match, Lausanne 1998, 1st game
Semi-Slav Defence D48

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 ♘c3 ♘f6 4 e3 e6 5 ♘f3 ♘bd7 6 ♗d3

In their Candidates match (1991), in Biel (1997) and in the 5th game of the match in Lausanne, Karpov played 6 ♕c2 against Anand (*Game Nos.95 and 96*), but on the whole Black was able to solve his opening problems.

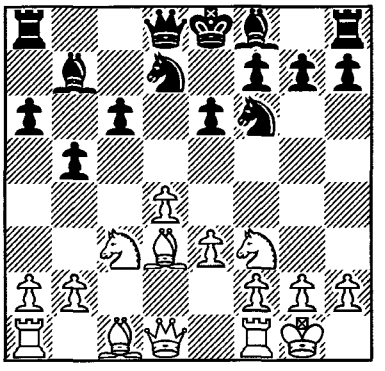
6...dxc4 7 ♗xc4 b5 8 ♗d3 ♗b7

This move of Larsen occurred most frequently in the 'Meran' encounters between these two opponents. Vishy also played 8...b4 several times, and it was only at the last attempt (Monaco rapidplay 1996) that Karpov gained a tangible advantage after the energetic 9 ♘e4 ♗e7 10 0-0 ♗b7 11 ♘xf6+ ♘xf6 12 a3 0-0 13 axb4 ♗xb4 14 e4 h6 15 e5! ♘d7 16 ♗c2 ♖e8 17 ♕d3 ♘f8 18 ♕e4 ♘g6 19 ♖d1 ♕e7 20 ♕g4!

9 0-0 (9 a3 – cf. *Game No.103*, note to Black's 8th move; 9 e4 – *Volume 4, Game Nos.43-47*)

9...a6

Now play transposes into the variation with 8...a6. Anand has also employed 9...b4 (like Polugayevsky – *Game No.26*) or even 9...♗e7.



10 e4 c5 11 d5 ♕c7 12 dxe6 fxe6 13 ♗c2

The premature 13 ♘g5 is parried by 13...♕c6! 14 ♕e2 c4 15 ♗c2 ♗c5 16 ♗e3 0-0 17 ♖ad1 h6 18 ♘f3 ♕c7 19 ♘d4 ♖ae8 20 a3 ♘e5 with an excellent game for Black (Karpov-Anand, Monaco rapidplay 1994).

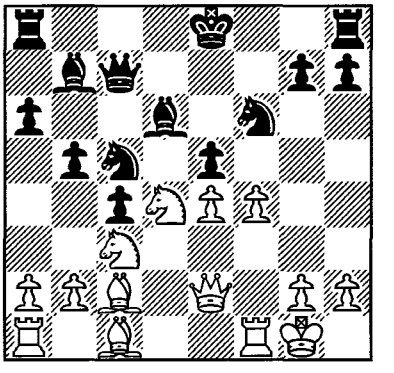
13...c4

The following double-edged continuation has also been tried: 13...♗e7 14 ♘g5 ♕c6 15 ♕f3 h6 16 ♕h3 hxg5!? 17 ♕xh8+ ♔f7 18 ♕h3 g4 19 ♕h4 ♘e5 (Karpov-Kramnik, Monaco rapidplay 1994), as well as, in the second half of the 1990s, Dreev's moves 13...0-0-0 or 13...♗d6!?

14 ♕e2

By that time 14 ♘g5 (*Game No.103*) had already been neutralised, and a new trend had developed – 14 ♘d4 ♘c5 15 ♗e3!, sacrificing the e4-pawn: 15...0-0-0 16 ♕e2 e5 17 ♘f3 (Lautier-Gelfand, Amsterdam 1996), or 15...e5 16 ♘f5 (Lautier-Kramnik, Monaco rapidplay 1996). 16 ♘f3! is stronger, and if 16...♘cxe4, then 17 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 18 ♖e1 with the initiative (Gelfand-Bareev, Novgorod 1997). Black does better to complete his development, even at the cost of the exchange: 16...♗e7! 17 ♘g5 0-0! 18 ♗xc5 ♗xc5 19 ♘e6 ♕b6 20 ♘xf8 ♖xf8 (Kasimdzhanov-Kasparov, Linares 2005).

14...♗d6 15 ♘d4 ♘c5 16 f4 e5



17 ♘dxb5!?

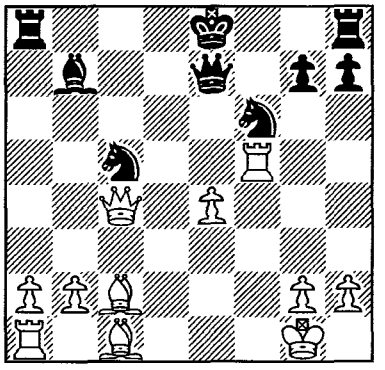
'An unpleasant surprise.' (Karpov). In a game with Akopian (Erevan Olympiad 1996) I spent a long time considering this sacrifice on

b5 and nevertheless played 17 ♘f5, but after 17...0-0 18 ♘xd6 ♕xd6 19 fxe5 ♕xe5 20 ♖f5 ♕c7 21 ♗g5 with the accurate 21...♘fxe4! 22 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 23 ♘xe4 ♕e5 Black forced a draw: 24 ♘f6+ gxf6 25 ♗xh7+ ♔xh7 26 ♕h5+.

After home preparation it was easier for Karpov to decide on the knight sacrifice, especially since his opponent, tired out after the battles in Groningen, might well have been unable to find his way in the resulting complications.

17...axb5 18 ♘xb5 ♕b6 19 ♘xd6+ ♕xd6 20 fxe5 ♕xe5 21 ♖f5 ♕e7 22 ♕xc4

Now Black faces an important choice.



22...♖c8

'A skilful defence – play in the centre!' (M.Gurevich). It was this move that almost completely put the variation with 17 ♘dxb5 out of use. It is dangerous to play 22...♘cxe4?! 23 ♕b5+! (depriving the opponent of the right to castle) 23...♔f8 24 ♗e3 with a strong attack. 22...♘cd7 leads to an unclear game (according to Anand, 'Kramnik said that he had checked all this way back in 1991 with some friends') after 23 ♗d2 ♖c8 24 ♕b3.

23 ♕b5+! ♘cd7!

'Impeccable tactical fencing by both sides.' (Zaitsev)

24 ♕xb7 (but not 24 ♗a4?! ♗c6 25 ♕a6 0-0! 26 ♗xc6 ♘b8 Karpov) **24...♖xc2 25 ♗g5**

If 25 ♖a5!? (Karpov) Black has the good reply 25...♔f7! (Stohl), since after 26 ♕b3+ ♕e6! 27 ♕xc2 with 27...♕b6+ he also picks up a rook.

25...♕d6!

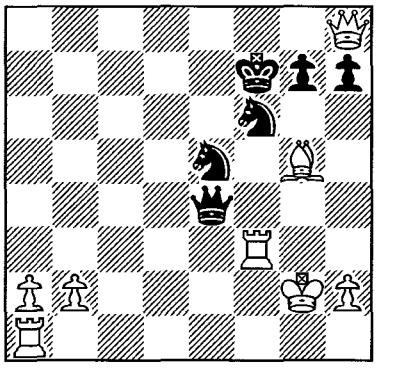
25...♕xe4? is not possible on account of 26 ♕xe4 ♘xe4 27 ♖e1 ♖c4 28 b3! (not 28 ♖d5? 0-0!) 28...♖d4 29 ♖f2! (a very strong manoeuvre) 29...h6 30 ♖d2! (Karpov) 30...♖b4 31 a3 and wins, while after 29...♘df6 30 ♖f4 (Stohl) 30...♖d1 (there is nothing better) 31 ♖xd1 ♘xg5 32 a4 Black again most probably loses.

26 ♕a8+ ♔f7?

Fatigue nevertheless told: Anand decided to force a pretty draw by perpetual check, but he missed White's 31st move. 26...♕b8 suggests itself: 27 ♕xb8+ ♘xb8 28 ♗xf6 (28 a4 0-0! Zaitsev) 28...gxf6 29 ♖f2 (Karpov) 29...♖xf2 30 ♔xf2 ♘c6 (Stohl), or 29 ♖xf6 ♖xb2 30 a4 ♘d7 31 ♖f2 ♖b4 32 a5 ♖xe4 33 a6 ♔e7 34 a7 ♖a8 (Flear-Galkin, Port Erin 2001) with a drawn endgame.

27 ♕xh8 ♕d4+ 28 ♔h1 ♕xe4 (28...♕xb2 29 ♖d1! M.Gurevich) **29 ♖f3 ♖xg2!?** (the point of Black's idea; 29...♘e5? 30 ♖xf6+) **30 ♔xg2 ♘e5**

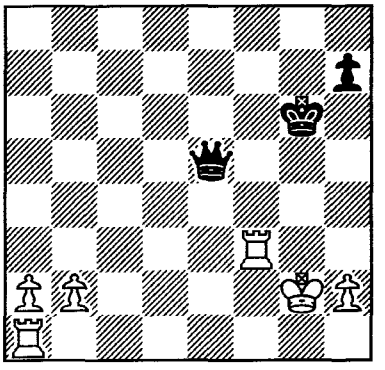
And here instead of 31 ♖f1, which is what Anand was expecting and which after 31...♘xf3 32 ♖xf3 ♕e2+ would have led to a draw, there follows... a queen sacrifice, after which the white bishop succeeds in eliminating both knights!



31 ♕xg7+!

'Usually a queen attacks a king from the centre of the board, but here this insidious

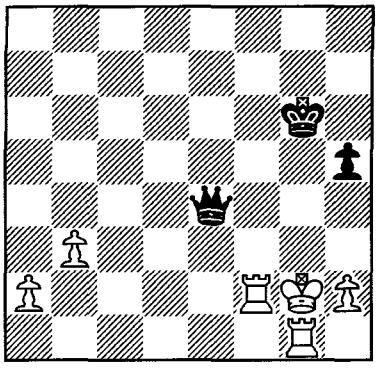
blow is struck from the very corner.' (Karpov)
31...♔xg7 32 ♗xf6+ ♔g6 (32...♔h6 does not change anything in view of 33 ♗xe5 ♕xe5 34 ♖f2) **33 ♗xe5 ♕xe5**



34 ♖g1 (a pretty ambush, but 34 ♖f2 is also sufficient – Stohl) **34...h5**

There is nothing else: 34...♕xb2+? 35 ♔h1+! ♔h5 36 ♖h3 mate.
35 b3! ♕e2+ 36 ♖f2

There was a quicker win by 36 ♔h3+ ♔h7 37 ♖f7+ ♔h6 38 ♖f6+ ♔h7 39 a4 (Karpov) or 37...♔h8 38 ♖f6! ♕d3+ 39 ♖g3 ♕d7+ 40 ♔h4 ♕d4+ 41 ♔g5 etc.
36...♕e4+



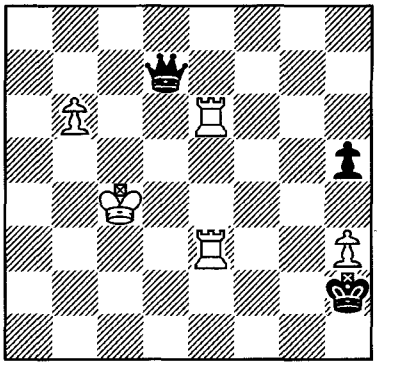
37 ♔f1+?!

And this is already an error. Now the a2-pawn is lost and the battle is greatly prolonged. After 37 ♔h3+! ♔h7 38 ♖f7+ ♔h6 (38...♔h8 39 ♖f6! – cf. above) 39 ♖f6+ ♔h7 40 ♖g3 both queenside pawns would have been ready to advance.
37...♔h6 38 ♖g3 ♕b1+ 39 ♔g2 ♕e4+ 40 ♖gf3 ♕g6+ 41 ♔f1 ♕b1+ 42 ♔g2 ♕g6+ 43 ♔h1 ♕b1+ 44 ♖f1 ♕xa2

To avoid the checks, White has had to give up a pawn, but subsequently Karpov plays accurately: the harmonious work of the rooks helps the white king to escape from the checks and the b-pawn to advance to the queening square.
45 ♖f6+ ♔g7 46 ♖f7+ ♔h8 47 ♖f8+ ♔g7 48 ♖8f7+ ♔g8 49 ♖7f3 ♔g7 50 h3 ♕c2 51 ♖1f2 ♕e4 52 ♔g2 ♕b4 53 ♖e2 ♕d4 54 ♖e7+ ♔g6 55 ♖e6+ ♔g7 56 ♖g3+ ♔f7 57 ♖ge3 ♕d5+ 58 ♔g3 ♕g5+ 59 ♔f2 ♕h4+ 60 ♔e2 ♕d4 61 ♖6e4 ♕a1?!

'An instantaneous, impulsive move' (M.Gurevich). All the commentators rightly considered 61...♕b2+ to be more tenacious, but after 62 ♔f3 ♕h2 63 h4 (Karpov, Zaitsev) White has a won position all the same.
62 ♔d3 ♔f6 63 ♖e6+ ♔f5 64 b4 ♕c1 65 ♔d4 ♕c8 66 b5 ♕d8+ 67 ♔c5 ♕c7+ 68 ♔b4 ♕f4+ 69 ♔b3 ♕c7 70 b6

'With the pawn on b6, the win is merely a question of time.' (M.Gurevich)
70...♕d7 71 ♖3e5+ ♔f4 72 ♖e4+ ♔g3 73 ♖e3+ ♔h2 74 ♔c4



The white pieces have achieved complete coordination, and now it is the turn of the king to help the b6-pawn to advance.
74...h4

Anand makes things easier for White, by giving up his pawn. After this, exploiting the fact that the queen is tied to the b6-pawn, Karpov calmly changes course with his king, sending it to the right flank to pick up the booty.

75 ♔c5! ♕c8+ 76 ♔d5 ♕d8+ 77 ♔e4 ♕d7 78 ♔f5 ♔g2 79 ♔g5 ♕g7+ 80 ♔xh4 ♔f2 (80...♕h7+ 81 ♔g5 ♕g7+ 82 ♖g6) **81 ♖3e5 ♕h8+**

81...♕g3+ 82 ♔h5 ♕xh3+ 83 ♔g6 ♕g2+ 84 ♖g5 ♕b7 85 ♖f5+ (Stohl) 85...♔g3 86 ♖f7 etc. was also hopeless.

82 ♔g4 ♕g7+ 83 ♔f5 ♕h7+ 84 ♔f6 ♕h4+ (84...♕xh3? 85 ♖e2+ would have led to the loss of the queen) **85 ♔f7 ♕h7+ 86 ♔e8 ♕b7 87 h4 ♕b8+ 88 ♔f7 ♕b7+ 89 ♔g6 ♕b8 90 h5 ♕g8+ 91 ♔f5 ♕h7+ 92 ♔f6 ♔f3 93 ♖e3+ ♔f2 94 ♖e2+ ♔f3 95 ♖2e3+ ♔f2 96 ♔g5 ♕g8+ 97 ♔h4 ♕d8+ 98 ♔h3 ♕d1 99 ♖e2+ ♔f3 100 ♔h2**

'Both players were extremely tired. Thus I missed the possibility of 100 ♖e1! with unavoidable mate.' (Karpov)

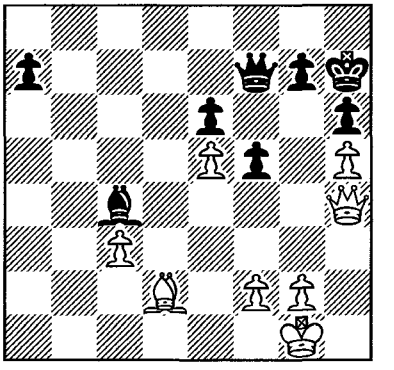
100...♕d8 101 ♖6e3+ ♔f4 102 b7 ♕b6 103 ♖e4+ ♔f3 104 ♖2e3+ ♔f2 105 ♖e7 ♕d6+ 106 ♔h3 ♕b8 107 ♖3e5 ♔g1 108 ♖g7+ 1-0

In view of 108...♔f2 109 ♖f7+ ♔g1 110 ♖e1 mate.

'An extremely vexing defeat for Vishy – and a very painful blow in such a short match.' (M.Gurevich). We must acknowledge Anand's courage and class: in the 2nd game he levelled the scores, in the 3rd he gained a draw in the 'Meran', and he was undoubtedly hoping to build on his success in the 4th.

But that day something went wrong for him in the opening. After failing to gain an advantage, Vishy handled the middlegame uncertainly and ended up in a rather unpleasant situation, demanding of White a painstaking defence. Whereas Karpov, who was in his element, sought the slightest chances of playing for a win. After the rooks were exchanged on the 32nd move, an endgame was reached with queens and opposite-coloured bishops, where White's defence was complicated by the weakness of his h5-pawn and the presence of the opponent's outside passed pawn on the a-file.

Game 106
V.Anand-A.Karpov
FIDE World Championship Match, Lausanne 1998, 4th game



33...♗b5! 34 c4 (34 ♕b4?! ♕xh5!) **34...♗e8 35 c5?**

With this natural move Anand misses a real chance of a draw: after 35 ♕d8! ♕xh5 36 ♗e3 it is not apparent how Black can win. At the board Karpov considered here 36...♗c6 37 ♕d6 ♗a8 38 ♕d8 ♗e4 39 f3 with equality.

Later Zaitsev recommended 36...♕g6, in order after 37 ♕d6 f4! 38 ♗xf4 ♕b1+! 39 ♔h2 ♕e4 to win a pawn, although it is possible that White can still save the queen endgame after 40 ♗e3 (40 ♕d2?! ♗c6! 41 f3 ♕xc4) 40...♗c6 41 f3 ♕xe3 42 ♕xc6 ♕xe5+ ('etc.' Zaitsev). But he has a stronger reply – 37 ♕a8! (control of the long diagonal) 37...a5 38 c5 a4 39 c6 f4 40 c7! (Ftacnik) with a draw.

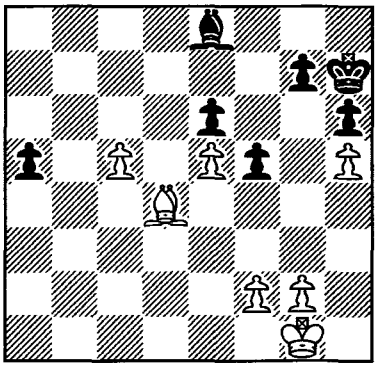
35...♕d7!

'An excellent manoeuvre.' (Zaitsev). 'The h5-pawn will not run away, and first Black can activate his queen.' (M.Gurevich)

36 ♗c3 ♕d3 37 ♕d4

To avoid the worst (37 ♗d4?! a5 or 37 ♗b4?! ♕d5) White exchanges queens, transposing into a bishop endgame a pawn down, since the h5-pawn is doomed.

37...♕xd4 38 ♗xd4 a5



39 c6?

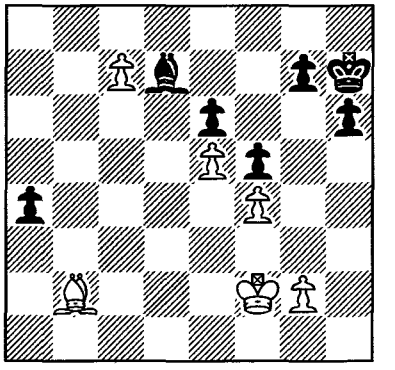
'It would appear that Anand was already reconciled to defeat.' (Karpov). 'A suicidal move, made instantly!! "The position was lost in any case," said Anand at a press conference. Even if this is so (and to me, for example, it is not obvious), 39 c6? is the quickest way to lose.' (M.Gurevich)

Indeed, this move deserves a question mark, for the reason that it makes things easier for Black. It would appear that Vishy was right: this highly interesting ending with opposite-coloured bishops was already lost for White! We will consider two ways of defending – with the pawn on f3 and with the pawn on f4:

1) 39 f3 ♗xh5 (39...f4!?) 40 c6 ♗e8 41 c7 ♗d7 42 ♔f2 a4 43 ♗c5 f4 (Ftacnik). Then Black plays ...g7-g5, ...♔g6-f5, ...h6-h5, moves his bishop to b7 and follows up with ...h5-h4 and ...♔g6-f7-e8-d7 or ...g5-g4, in order after f3xg4 and ...h5xg4 followed by g2-g3xf4 and ...♔xf4 to obtain a position of the same type that arises in variation 2: Black places his pawn on g3 and breaks through unhindered with his king on the queenside.

According to Karpov, the defensive line with 42 g3 a4 43 ♗b2 is more tenacious, but in my view this does not seriously complicate Black's task: 43...g5 44 ♔f2 ♔g6 45 ♔e3 ♗c8 46 ♗a3 ♗b7 47 ♗d6 ♔f7 48 ♗a3 ♔e8 49 f4 ♔d7 50 ♗d6 ♔c6 51 ♔d4 gxf4 52 gxf4 h5 53 ♔e3 ♔d5 or 49 ♗b4 ♔d7 50 ♗d6 ♔c6 51 ♔d4 (if 51 f4, then 51...♔d5 52 fxg5 hxg5 53 ♔d3 ♗a6+! 54 ♔e3 ♔c4) 51...h5! 52 ♗e7 (after 52 f4 gxf4 53 gxf4 h4 54 ♔e3 ♔d5 the win is simple) 52...♔xc7 53 ♗xg5 ♗xf3 with two extra pawns and the imminent creation of a second passed pawn.

2) 39 f4 a4 40 ♗b2 ♗xh5 41 c6 ♗e8 42 c7 ♗d7 43 ♔f2, and Black faces a difficult choice.



Analysis diagram

The hasty 43...g5? throws away the win: 44 ♔g3 ♔g6 45 ♗c1! ♔h5 46 ♗a3 ♗c8 47 ♗c1 ♗b7 48 ♗a3 ♔g6 49 ♗c1. The pawn tension created is advantageous to White. If 49...g4 he acquires the move 50 ♔h4 with a threat to the h6-pawn. And after 49...♔f7, to take the king to the queenside, White captures the pawn (50 fxg5 hxg5 51 ♗xg5), returns with his bishop (51...a3 52 ♗c1 a2 53 ♗b2), and then has time to exchange his weak g-pawn (53...♔e7 54 ♔f4 ♔d7 55 g4 fxg4 56 ♔xg4 ♔xc7) and return with his king (57 ♔f4 ♔b6 58 ♔e3 ♔c5 59 ♔d2). 49...♗a6 50 ♔f3 gxf4 51 ♔xf4 ♔f7 52 g4 fxg4 53 ♔xg4 ♔e7 is more cunning. Now 54 ♔h5? loses: 54...♔d7 55 ♔xh6 ♔xc7 56 ♔g5 ♔c6 57 ♔f4 ♔d5 58 ♗b2 ♔c4 59

♔e3 ♔b3 60 ♗d4 ♔c2! 61 ♗c5 ♗b5 – zugzwang. 54 ♗a3+ ♔d7 55 ♗d6 ♗e2+ 56 ♔h4 ♔c8 57 ♔g3 is correct, when Black cannot break through with his king. The bishop at d6 is ideally placed: it defends the c7-pawn and controls the a4-pawn.

43...♔g6! leads to a decisive strengthening of the position: 44 ♗a3 ♗c8 45 ♔e3, and now not 45...♔f7 46 ♔d4 (Ftacnik) 46...♔e8 47 ♔c5 ♔d7 48 ♔b5! (not 48 ♔b6? on account of 48...g5 49 fxg5 hxg5 50 ♗b2 f4 51 ♗c1 ♔e7 – Black gives up his bishop for the c-pawn, but creates a second passed pawn on the kingside) 48...♔xc7 49 ♔xa4 with a draw, but 45...♔h5! (45...♗b7, preventing ♔f3, will perhaps also do) 46 ♔f3 ♔h4 47 ♗e7+ g5 48 fxg5 hxg5 49 g3+ ♔h5 50 ♗a3 ♗b7+ 51 ♔f2 ♔g4 52 ♗c1 ♗a6 53 ♔g2 ♗c8 54 ♔f2 ♗b7 (zugzwang forces White to move his bishop from c1) 55 ♗a3 f4 56 gxf4 ♔xf4! 57 ♗c1+ ♔g4 58 ♔g1 ♔h4, and the black pawn goes to g3, and the king – with decisive effect – to the queenside.

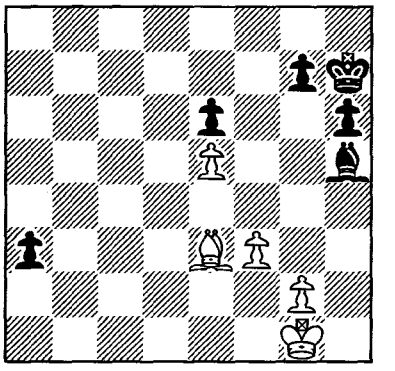
Nothing would have been changed by 39 ♗c3 a4 40 ♗b4 ♗xh5! 41 c6 ♗e2! 42 c7 ♗a6 (Karpov, Zaitsev). After f2-f3 or f2-f4 Black carries out one of the plans examined above. Thus it can be said with a large degree of certainty that Anand missed a draw earlier, although, if White had retained his c-pawn, the win for Black would have been more difficult. Anand was hoping to ease his defence by retaining an equal number of pawns on the kingside.

39...♗xc6 40 f3 f4!

Vishy underestimated this study-like possibility. 'The key move, which Karpov undoubtedly foresaw in advance.' (Zaitsev). After 40...♗e8 41 g4 the game would probably have ended in a draw. Now, however, Black picks up the h5-pawn and White, while dealing with the f4-pawn, is forced to allow the enemy passed pawn to reach a2.

41 ♗b2 ♗e8 42 ♗c1 a4 43 ♗xf4 a3 44 ♗e3 ♗xh5

White's downfall is caused by the weakness of his kingside pawns. If he places them on light squares, then the threat of their elimination by the bishop means that the white king will be unable to head to the queenside, when the black king breaks through there. But placing them on dark squares creates irreparable light-squared weaknesses, which the black king can exploit to set up a second passed pawn.



45 ♔f2

Or 45 g4 a2 46 ♗d4 ♗e8 47 f4 g6 (Black sets about creating a passed pawn) 48 ♔f2 h5 49 ♔g3 ♗a4 50 ♔h4 ♔h6 51 ♗c3 ♗d1 52 gxh5 gxh5 (Ftacnik) – now the white king will be tied to the h-pawn, while Black's heads to the queenside.

45...♗e8 46 ♗d4 ♗c6 47 ♗c3 a2

'Black has a clear-cut winning plan: ...♔g6-f5, ...g7-g5, ...h6-h5-h4 and ...g5-g4! Realising this, Vishy provokes a crisis.' (M.Gurevich)

48 g3 h5! 49 g4

'This hastens the end.' (Karpov). But 49 ♔g2 g5 50 ♔f2 ♔g6 51 ♔e3 h4 52 ♔f2 h3 is equally hopeless, while if 49 f4, then 49...♔g6 50 ♔e3 ♔f5 51 ♗b2 ♔g4 52 ♔f2 h4 53 gxh4 ♔xf4! (Ftacnik), and the h-pawn is lost.

49...h4! 0-1

After 50 f4 g5! 51 f5 (51 fxg5 ♔g6) 51...exf5 52 gxf5 g4 the black pawns are irresistible.

'Anand must have been shocked by the events of this game: something out of the or-

dinary happened, the sort of occurrence that is etched for a long time in the memory of chess generations.' (Zaitsev). Incidentally, a couple of decades earlier Karpov had already won a similar ending with opposite-coloured bishops against Kurajica (*Game No.69*). These two endings are an excellent illustration of how the 12th world champion succeeded with maximum effect in exploiting imperceptible errors, committed by his opponents under the weight of mounting problems.

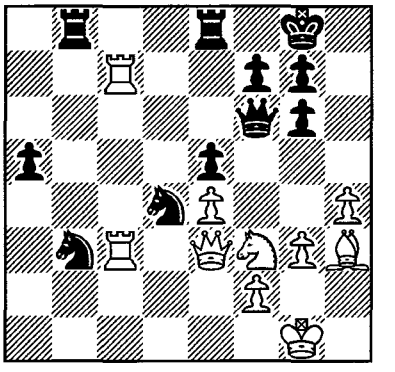
'Karpov's first win against Anand with Black!' wrote grandmaster Mikhail Gurevich after the 4th game. 'The loss has put Vishy in an extremely difficult match situation. As for the quality of his play in this game, it can be explained only by extreme tiredness. Human powers are not unlimited: behind him he already had a month of continuous play...'

Nevertheless, Anand gained a draw in the 5th game without particular problems, and then he won the 6th, truly the 'game of his life': 3-3! 'Of course, I did not expect that I would manage to win,' he said immediately after the game, 'and now I am very, very happy. I am so pleased that I have managed to level the scores, that for the moment I am not thinking about tomorrow's tie-break. I will think about it later.'

A dramatic moment! Makarichev: 'Vishy probably experienced a feeling of mental bankruptcy – the bankruptcy of a victor, when after very hard labours his joy mingles with numbness and apathy. But he still had to play the tie-break!' Campomanes: 'The same thing happened with Karpov as in 1987 in Seville: he again was unable to make a draw in the last, decisive game of the match. But in Seville there was no tie-break, but here there is one – and it is practically impossible to predict the winner.'

Karpov: 'I was very upset: I lost a position in which there were no longer any dangers for Black. I didn't calculate a variation. Well, and for a match that was going so well to come to such a state – that, of course, was a shock, and we hardly slept all night. Although we took a decision: no chess, no analysis of either the past, or the future – simply have a clear head. The only thing that helped was a cold shower before the game.'

The following day the fate of the match and of the FIDE crown was decided in a mini-match of two rapidplay games. It appeared that this was Anand's forte, but at some point fatigue was bound finally to let him down. In the 1st game with Black he obtained a completely winning position, and also a big advantage in time, but... he began to 'drift'! Just before the end, the leader suddenly staggered and fell in the last few metres of the marathon.



39...♘xf3+?

Black could have won by 39...a4! (Yusupov) 40 ♗d7 (40 ♘g5 a3) 40...♘xf3+ 41 ♕xf3 ♕xf3 42 ♖xf3 ♖e7 43 ♗xa4 (there is nothing else: 43 ♖c8+ ♖xc8 44 ♗xc8 ♖a7) 43...♖xc7 44 ♗xb3 ♔f8 etc.

40 ♕xf3 a4? (40...♘d4! would still have retained a healthy extra pawn) **41 ♕xf6 gxf6 42 ♗d7 ♘d4?** (42...♖e7 with equality) **43 ♗xe8 ♘e2+ 44 ♔g2 ♘xc3 45 ♗xf7+ ♔f8 46 ♗xg6**, and Black was unable to restrain the onslaught of the white pawns (**1-0**).

Karpov: 'At the start of the 1st game of the tie-break I felt somehow sluggish, but then I livened up and my clarity and rapidity of thought returned... I think that Anand was

simply not prepared for a fierce battle: he thought that he played better at rapidplay chess and that things were already settled. He gave every appearance of thinking that the champion's title was already his. But at the finish I composed myself better.' However, judging by the 1st game, this was not the case: it was not Karpov who 'composed himself' and won, but Anand who switched off and lost.

Zaitsev: 'The break between the games – 15 minutes – was used by Karpov's physical trainer Valery Krylov to massage his protégé, whereas Elizbar Ubilava tried in vain to calm his down ("Vishy could no longer hear and see me: he wasn't there..."). Alas, in the 2nd game Anand did not demonstrate the necessary strength of mind, lost control over himself and the position, at a furious tempo gave up two pawns for no reason at all, and the first world championship match under the new system concluded.'

Thus Karpov retained his title of 'king of FIDE', provoking, however, a mixed reaction in the chess world. Dvoretsky: 'The odds were too colossal and undeserved! The extremely tired Anand had to fight against the fresh, well prepared Karpov. Even in these conditions he did not manage to win in "normal time", and in the first rapidplay game he escaped defeat simply by a miracle. Anand now, and this is not only my view, is much stronger than Karpov and would most probably have won if conditions had been equal (both players equally fresh or equally tired). Karpov has juridically become world champion, but in the eyes of nearly all chess players he is not so in effect.'

What can be done: after 1993 the question of who was the real champion – actual or 'juridical', was one that everyone decided for himself, based on his likings... However, what for me is certain and is confirmed by the games given in this volume, is that Anatoly Karpov is one of the greatest epoch-creating players of the late 20th century, and his contribution to our knowledge of the subtleties of the ancient game is truly invaluable.

It is appropriate to conclude this account of the 12th world champion's career with the words of his long-standing trainer Igor Zaitsev:

'It is typical that with the black pieces Karpov has already been more attracted by those openings where the choice of variation remains with Black. For example, in the Caro-Kann – 4...♘d7 or 4...♗f5, in the Ruy Lopez – the Smyslov, Breyer or Zaitsev Variations. The same can be said about the Queen's Indian Defence, and the Nimzo-Indian Defence. In my view, this is a non-deliberate manifestation of the sensible efficiency, typical of this great player.

'In drawing up various opening conceptions, we, of course, mainly took into account the chess likings of Karpov himself. It has always seemed to me that, by beginning his direct preparations only at the very last moment, he gives something of a handicap to all his match opponents and with the years this habit of his has only become more deep-rooted. Karpov has never been considered an openings expert, in view of the nature of his talent. In his best years he was a colossal practical player with a staggering positional intuition, and he was always more inclined to trust his feeling, rather than long variations adjusted to fit a certain result. But at the same time his contribution to opening theory is sufficiently great and distinctive, like the contribution of the triumvirate of world champions – Capablanca, Smyslov and Petrosian, with a similar attitude and approach to opening problems.'

In conclusion – the traditional selection of opinions by world champions.

Euwe: 'By his style of play Karpov can be compared with the Cuban genius Capablanca, although there is also one important distinction. When you play through Capablanca's games, the thought involuntarily occurs to you: oh, it's all so simple, even I could do that. By contrast, Karpov's games initially startle

you by their strategy, which seems illogical, but soon it becomes clear that in fact his play is extremely logical. Like the Cuban, he is especially tenacious in difficult positions. Capablanca and Karpov are similar in one other feature – they lose extremely rarely... The Karpov phenomenon has no analogues; at any event, there have been so such champions before him. I have in mind not his youth and the speed with which he climbed to the chess summit, but his amazingly stable results and balanced play. Excellent play. In it there is so much adult grandmaster reckoning, so much sobriety and quiet confidence in himself, and in his powers!'

Botvinnik: 'Many experts consider Karpov to be a rationalist, an uncommonly cold-blooded fighter, to whom emotions are completely alien, and so on. Now the opposite can be affirmed: Karpov is emotional, like many people, but he masters and controls himself well, so that a false impression is created. He undoubtedly possesses a strong self-instruction program. He demonstrates an excellent understanding of positional principles, and he has no equals in the art of harmoniously arranging his pieces. His pieces are usually invulnerable, whereas the opponent's pieces are subject to constant pressure. In this respect Karpov's style is significantly better than that of Petrosian, who, after achieving an absolutely safe position for himself, would patiently wait for mistakes by the opponent. Karpov does not wait: he plays actively.'

Smyslov: 'In Karpov's play I have always been staggered by his amazing ability to soberly and absolutely accurately evaluate the position on the board. To evaluate quickly, without spending much time on analysis. This comes from his fantastic chess intuition, from his innate talent. And after all, the correct evaluation of a position, the evaluation of your possibilities in it, is the basis of successful play. It is primarily this that distinguishes Karpov among the leading grandmasters in the world.'

Tal: 'Karpov is fantastically purposeful. He is like a tank, which cannot be diverted from its goal. His iron persistence is torture for the faint hearted. Not without reason have some of my colleagues lamented after losing to Karpov: it's impossible to play – he puts pressure on your mind. Karpov's character is the same as his play. Both in life, and at the chessboard, he is extremely purposeful. This is the main thing about him. It can be said that his strong aspects are precisely what I am lacking. Karpov has a simply classic way of converting an advantage – I have never learned to do this. At critical moments he is able to control his impulses – I cannot restrain my emotions... Anatoly has always staggered me by his ability to defend, as they say, to the last, where many others would already have lost heart.'

Petrosian: 'Karpov demonstrates with his performances that he has a very purposeful nature. His chess outlook is clearly outlined. This is very important. Every improving talented player should have his outlook, his tastes, his likings, his point of view on certain chess problems – theoretical, practical and philosophical. Fischer has his firm states, and he is amazingly constant in his sympathies. We observe roughly the same with Karpov. True, Karpov's style is still evolving. I think that he will be a universal and versatile player.'

Spassky: 'Karpov is a chess genius, but in the ideological sense he is similar to Botvinnik. Karpov used the support of the Party to achieve his personal aims. And later he began to justify these as being the aims of the state... But one has to give him his due: as a chess player he is indeed great.'

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